An Introduction to ETHICS

WILLIAM LILLIE

METHUEN : LONDON

This book should serve both as a text-book for a first year's course for University students and as an introduction to ethics for the general reader. It is written by a teacher who for twenty-five years has been engaged in giving a simple account of European ethics to Indian students and has so learned to express the teachings of the great moralists in the simplest possible language. This book differs from other elementary text-books in giving a larger place to the rich contributions made by twentieth-century moralists, both to the interpretation of their predecessors and to original ethical speculation.

'Mr. Lillie must be congratulated on the way in which his book is arranged, on the helpful book-list at the end, and on his wealth of interesting and sensible examples. I shall unhesitatingly recommend his book to first-year students.'

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by

WILLIAM LILLIE



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PREFACE

This book makes no claim to originality of thought, for its purpose is only to introduce beginners to what the great moralists have thought in the past and are thinking to-day about ethical matters. It differs from other elementary text-books in giving a larger place to the work of living writers on ethics, and to do so seems advisable even in an introductory text-book, because of the rich contributions made by twentieth century moralists both to the interpretation of their predecessors and to original ethical speculation. Most teachers to-day feel that the older introductions, the best of which were written in the now unfamiliar language of late nineteenth century Idealism, are out of date, and the conviction that a more modern introduction in simple language is needed by undergraduates during their first year's study of ethics has been my chief reason for writing this book.

It is fitting that I should thank all those whose teachings and writings have been used in this book; the frequency with which the names of some moralists occur in the text or footnotes indicates those to whom I owe most. The arrangement of topics has been largely determined by their order in the syllabus for the first year's course in ethics, prescribed by the University of the Panjab, in which I have been privileged to be a teacher, and my own presentation of the subject has probably been influenced more than I realise by a long use of Mackenzie's *Manual of Ethics*, the text-book prescribed for that course.

I am especially grateful to my wife who, after carefully reading my script, has pointed out many passages which in their original form were likely to be misunderstood by beginners, and has helped me to amend them, and to my sisters, Misses Isobel and Mary Lillie, who have undertaken the wearisome task of correcting proofs.

In this third edition, I have added a chapter on 'The Language of Ethics', which has occupied a large place in ethical discussions in the last few years. I wish to express my gratitude to my colleague, Dr. R. W. Hepburn, of the Department of Moral Philosophy in this University, who read the chapter in manuscript, and made several most helpful suggestions.

King's College,
Aberdeen.
March, 1955.

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Chapter I

THE NATURE OF ETHICS

§1. *A Provisional Definition*

In ordinary conversation we often hear such statements as: 'He ought not to have done this', 'It is a good thing to help one's neighbours', 'He is a thoroughly good man', 'His character is bad', 'He was only doing his duty', or 'It is always right to speak the truth.' When such statements are made they are frequently contradicted by someone hearing them, and this by itself suggests that they are not as simple as at first sight they appear to be. If a friend disagrees with my statement that Smith is a thoroughly good man, he may do so for one of two reasons. (a) He may know facts about Smith's behaviour which are unknown to me; and if he tells me these facts and convinces me that they are true, I shall then be ready to admit that Smith is in some respects not a good man. (b) It may be the case, however, that my friend and I both know the same facts about Smith, and yet I continue to hold that Smith is thoroughly good, while my friend considers him to be bad. Now we are using the words 'good' and 'bad' with different meanings, and, until we come to some agreement as to their meanings, we are not likely to agree in our opinion of Smith. This is just the kind of question with which ethics deals—what is the true meaning of such words as 'good' and 'right" and 'ought' which are used so commonly in everyday conversation. When we come to an agreement as to the meaning of such words, other questions will arise. We may ask whether it is possible for us to know whether Smith is good or bad; we may ask on what grounds Smith should give up those activities which we have agreed to call bad, and should engage in those which we have agreed to call good. All these and many other similar questions are within the scope of ethics.

We may define ethics as the normative science of the conduct of human beings living in societies—a science which judges this conduct to be right or wrong, to be good or bad, or in some similar way. This definition says, first of all, that ethics is a science, and a science may be defined as a systematic and more or less complete body of knowledge about a particular set of related events or objects. In this account of science, the important word is *systematic*; scientific knowledge differs from the ordinary, haphazard knowledge of uneducated people in being arranged in a definite coherent system. A science also aims at providing as complete a knowledge of its subject-matter as it can, although, in the present state of knowledge, no science is perfect in this respect. At the same time, the scientist may leave out details that he knows, in order to give a simpler and clearer presentation of the important connexions of the facts which he studies. It is generally agreed that a piece of knowledge cannot be regarded as 'scientific' until it is accepted by those who are learned in the particular science concerned: in medicine, for example, the new cures which are so convincingly advertised cannot be regarded as scientific until they have been recognized as effective by capable doctors. Finally, the sphere of a science is limited to one set of facts or objects; no science deals with all the facts known about the universe; to deal with the universe as a whole is the work of metaphysics or philosophy, which is not a science. Each science has its own particular sphere; botany deals with plants, psychology with minds, and ethics with certain judgements that we make about human conduct.

The sciences which are studied in the laboratories of our universities are descriptive or positive sciences. Positive sciences describe objects or phenomena as we observe them with our eyes and other sense-organs, or in the case of mental processes like desiring and willing as we observe them by introspection or looking inside our minds. ('Phenomenon' is just the technical term for anything that can be observed in this way.) There is in a positive science no question of judging its objects in any way. If the botanist judges a certain plant to be good or bad, or even to be beautiful or ugly, he is no longer doing the work of a botanist, whose business it is

to describe what he observes without judging either its reality or its value. The psychologist describes the mental processes like intention and willing which lead to human conduct, but, as psychologist, he has no concern with the goodness or badness of that conduct. There is a group of sciences, however, which do not deal directly with observed facts but which deal, as systematically and completely as is possible, with the standards or rules or norms or criteria by which we judge certain objects, and these sciences are called normative sciences. Aesthetics, for example, deals systematically with the standards by which we judge objects of perception, commonly sights and sounds, to be beautiful or ugly. Logic deals with the standards by which we judge statements to be true or false, and ethics deals with the standards by which we judge human actions to be right or wrong. The normative sciences differ from the positive sciences in one more way; they do not merely describe the standards by which we judge; they are also concerned with the validity or truth of these standards. In ethics for example it is not enough to describe the rules by which men have tested their conduct, such as the Ten Commandments of the Hebrews; we also ask in ethics why these rules are valid or on what grounds we ought to observe them.

Ethics has been defined as the normative science of conduct, and conduct is a collective name for voluntary actions. In common speech we judge many things other than human actions to be good or bad; we speak for example of good wine and bad luck. The words 'good' and 'bad' are used ambiguously in ordinary speech. A single science may be required to deal with them in all their various meanings and to distinguish these meanings from one another, and such a science is sometimes called axiology or the science of values. We shall see later that one ethical theory holds that what we mean by calling an action right or good is that it leads to a result which is good in one of the various senses of good, and, if this theory be accepted, a study of ethics would require to be completed by a study of axiology. At the outset, however, it will keep things more clear if we confine ethics to the study of human conduct and leave to axiology the study of other things that can be called good or bad. Conduct does not

include those human activities like the circulation of the blood over which most normal people have no control, but it includes all voluntary actions. A voluntary action is an action that a man could have done differently if he had so chosen. Voluntary actions include all willed or volitional actions in which there is a conscious process of willing like the action of a student matriculating in a university. Voluntary actions also include certain actions, where there may be no conscious process of willing at all, provided that the doer could have prevented or changed the action by choosing to do so. A habitual action like a child's sucking of his thumb, or even a reflex action like blinking in a strong light, may be voluntary although the doer of these actions may not be thinking about them at all. The doer, by attending to them and choosing, could have done these actions differently or refrained from doing them at all, and so they must be regarded as voluntary. Sometimes people try to excuse their wrong actions by saying that these actions were not deliberately willed or chosen, as when a man continues a dishonest business practice of his predecessor without thinking about it. The question for ethics is not whether such an action was deliberately willed, but whether the doer could have prevented it by taking thought about it. If he could have prevented it, the action can certainly be judged to be a right or a wrong action, although we may admit that its degree of rightness or wrongness may be affected by its deliberateness. Conduct may include inward activities like motives and desires as well as outward activities like speech and movements of the doer's limbs, and so these also will fall within the sphere of ethics. We so commonly think of these as causing outward bodily movements that we forget that they too are activities and liable to be judged good or bad even apart from the outward movements they produce.

Our provisional definition has limited the conduct with which we deal in ethics in two ways. We deal with human actions and not with the actions of the lower animals. It may be admitted that there is something like human goodness about a dog's loyalty to its master, but psychologists are so far from agreeing as to whether any of the actions of the lower animals are voluntary in the sense given to this word in the

last paragraph, that it would be unwise to add to our complications by including animal activities within the limits of our subject. A more arbitrary limitation is that of confining ethics to the study of the conduct of human beings living in societies. Some moralists would indeed go further and hold that the standards of ethics only apply to the relations of men with one another; the conduct studied in ethics is not only conduct done in a society, but conduct that affects some other member or members of that society. It is worth while including a reference to society in our definition to remind ourselves that, if it were not for his social background, a human being would not be a real human being capable of right and wrong actions. Aristotle expressed this by saying, 'He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god.'[1] Robinson Crusoe's conduct in the solitude of his desert island may be still judged good or bad, but, according to this view, these terms would obtain their meaning from the social environment in which Crusoe had lived before he found himself in an uninhabited island, and to which there was always a hope that he might return. It may be for some purposes convenient to include in a single normative science the standards by which we judge all human activities including those that appear to have no effects on other people or relations with them, and it is difficult to think of another name than ethics for such a science. Yet common usage would certainly make a social activity like speaking the truth more directly the concern of ethics than a purely private activity with no marked social effects like stamp-collecting or a religious activity like fasting. Of course such activities do have indirect social effects; the man who is fasting cannot share his food with a visitor, and so far his action would be judged by the standards of ethics. This limitation is one that may have to be given up on a fuller study of ethics, but, in the beginning we shall find it an advantage to emphasize the social background of the moral life, and to confine the activities judged in ethics to those done with the normal human background of social institutions and social relationships.

[1] Aristotle: *Politics*, Bk. I, Ch. 2 (1280 b. 10).

There are several terms commonly used in judging human actions by ethical standards. We say that an action is 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', 'moral' or 'immoral'. We say that we 'ought' to do an action, that we 'should' do it or that it is our 'duty' to do it; and of another kind of action we say that we 'ought not' to do it, we 'should not' do it, or it is our 'duty' not to do it. Of these terms 'good' and 'bad' are probably the most common, but they are also the most troublesome. In the first place, they are used ambiguously in common speech; not only are 'good' works done by the pious, but the trouble-maker enjoys a 'good' fight, and the successful burglar makes a 'good' haul from the safe which he has robbed. In fact, the word 'good' as commonly used merely indicates an attitude of mind in favour of the object or event to which the term good is applied, and nothing more, so that almost anything may be termed good if anyone finds himself in favour of its existence even to a very limited degree. The ordinary man seems to distinguish such a loose sense of good from a more definitely moral sense, but even about the moral sense there is a great deal of ambiguity. We certainly think of morally good conduct not merely as that towards which men feel a favourable attitude; it is in some sense conduct *worthy* of arousing such a favourable attitude or conduct that *ought* to arouse such an attitude. This is sometimes expressed by saying that when we call conduct 'good' we are approaching it from the standpoint of value, but surely 'value' has just the same meaning as 'goodness' in the widest axiological use of that term. It is convenient in ethics to use the words 'good' or 'bad' of an action, when we are thinking of the action as leading to consequences, which are 'good' or 'bad' in some sense of these very ambiguous terms, for example, consequences which satisfy our desires, but this limitation is hardly in accord with common use. The whole range of the meanings of 'good' will have to be considered when we come to those ethical theories which regard the 'goodness' or 'rightness' of an action as depending upon its power of producing 'good' results.

The words 'right' and 'wrong' have no such reference to consequences. They are used of actions that are in some way 'fitting' to their circumstances, as when we say that a

person said or did the right thing in an interview. The fittingness of a right action often appears to consist in its conformity to some rule, and the view that the moral life is a matter of obeying rules is a very common one. We think of an action as before a judge, and when he has passed his judgement, it is called right. There are however other uses of 'right' than the moral one; we use it commonly in aesthetic judgements, such as 'This is the right kind of hat to go with this dress', or 'This word is just right in this line of the poem'. In this aesthetic use, 'right' also suggests fittingness to circumstances, but here this fittingness is an aesthetic one.

The word 'right' sometimes suggests that the action referred to is in some way obligatory; the doer or other people feel that he ought to do it. This is not always the case; it is right for a man to feel regret when his mother-in-law leaves his house, but no one could say that he ought to do so, if his feelings are not under his control. This sense of obligatoriness is, however, definitely implied in the phrases 'He ought to do this', or 'It is his duty to do this', and it is one factor which influences the doer in doing or not doing the action. Such a judgement of ought-ness or duty is very different from the judgement of goodness. We might all agree to say that it is good to eat ice-cream on a very hot day, but no one would seriously say that we ought to eat ice-cream, or that it is our duty to eat ice-cream on a hot day, because we do not feel any obligation to do so, unless we wish. It may be suggested that what distinguishes an action which we ought to do from one that is merely right, is that, when we ought to do an action, the action is not only right but there are motives and inclinations in the mind of the doer which would hinder his doing it. We can say that the malaria patient ought to take his daily dose of quinine, because the unpleasant taste of the medicine makes him strongly disinclined to do so.

It is possible for more than one action to be right at the same time. It may be equally right for me to drink coffee or to drink tea at breakfast; it may be equally right for me to study economics or to study history in a university course. In such cases we cannot say that I ought to drink coffee or that it is my duty to drink tea or that I ought to study economics, or that it is my duty to study history. These phrases imply that there

is one and only one action which is right for me at the moment. If it is my duty *now* to study history, then no other action would be right at this moment, so that to study economics would be wrong for me. Of course, in a rather more elaborate way of speaking, I may be able to say that it is my duty to study either history or economics, but this would again imply that to study mathematics, at least on this particular occasion, would be wrong. The words 'ought' and 'duty' certainly apply only to right actions, but they suggest, if not imply, certain other things about these right actions: (a) that they are obligatory on a particular individual, (b) that there are tendencies in the mind of the doer making him disinclined to do them, and (c) that one, and only one, action is right at a particular moment.

While these appear to be the distinctions in common speech in the use of ethical terms, it is to be remembered that there may be a difference of emphasis or even meaning in the use of such terms by different persons. Some, like Kant, may feel a sense of awe in the presence of the statement that a certain action is a man's duty, or that he ought to do it, but the moral judgement may arouse no such feeling in another man. The business of the student of ethics is to try to reach meanings which will be generally accepted by educated people, and also to limit these meanings so that the terms will be free from ambiguity and our use of them free from inconsistency. Yet we are not likely to attain this in ethics, for ethical terms, unlike the technical terms of the sciences, are words in common use on men's lips, and are liable to constant change in emphasis and meaning.

§2. *Moral Sciences*

An attempt has been made in the last section to give a definition of ethics, and to explain the various words used in that definition. In the case of a subject like ethics, about the subject-matter of which most people have some ideas, it is even more helpful to distinguish ethics from the other sciences dealing with human conduct with which it may be confused. There are certain sciences in which we describe human conduct without expressing any opinion about its value or making any judgement about it. At present, the most

scientific description of human conduct is probably that given by psychology, and one school of modern psychology, the behaviourist school, holds that the sole subject-matter of a really scientific psychology is conduct or behaviour. Most psychologists, however, hold the principal part of their field to be not so much the resulting conduct as the inward processes, like intention and decision, which lead to outward conduct. One branch of psychology, now called social psychology, describes among other things conduct in its social relations, and this is the kind of conduct with which ethics is chiefly concerned. Human conduct is also described in sociology, which may be defined as the science of human society, and while the study of individual conduct has now become the sphere of social psychology rather than sociology, sociology still has for its subject-matter the social institutions and customs which form the background of all human conduct and especially the conduct directed towards other human beings which is the special concern of ethics. Anthropology in its widest sense as the science of man includes human conduct in its sphere, and a great deal of the work of anthropologists has been the description of the conduct and customs of primitive peoples. Indeed, the anthropologist has given so much attention to primitive peoples that we are apt to forget that anthropology deals properly with all mankind and not merely with savage peoples. And anthropology deals with more than conduct; it deals with the physical and mental characteristics of people which only affect their conduct indirectly. These three sciences, psychology, sociology and anthropology, all provide us with facts about human conduct; and a general knowledge of such facts is a necessary preliminary to making true judgements about human conduct. Even in such a brief survey of ethics as that contained in this book, it will be necessary to make a restatement of certain psychological and sociological facts in the second, third and fourth chapters. Yet just because these sciences are positive sciences which avoid judgements of value of any kind, we are not very likely to confuse them with ethics.

There is, however, one branch of positive science which is nearer to ethics than the rest. The sociologist or the anthropologist may not only describe human conduct and its

conditions; he may go on to describe the opinions that men have held in different ages and in different places about their own conduct and that of others, what kind of actions they have commonly regarded as good and right, and what kind of actions they have regarded as bad and wrong. This is what the sociologist Westermarck has done in his book *The History of Human Marriage*; he has not only described marriage customs and rites, but has told what people in different countries and different periods of history have thought right or have thought wrong in connection with marriage. Now, here the sociologist is still *describing* facts; he is not *judging* or *evaluating* them in any way. In this science a sociologist may state that polygamy under certain conditions is considered right by Mohammadans but is considered wrong by Christians, but he has no right to go on to say that, in this matter, the judgement of Christians is true while that of Mohammadans is false or vice versa. To do so would be to leave the work of a positive science and to take up the work of ethics. We shall see in a later section on the methods of ethics that ethics must take into account the opinions of ordinary men on ethical matters, and, to this extent, ethics is dependent on this descriptive science, which we may label the 'positive science of morals'. At the present day the word 'morals' is used with a variety of meanings, for the science of ethics itself, for actions regarded as good and right, and for the rules according to which such actions are done. It was originally derived from the Latin word 'mores', meaning customs, and so may be appropriately used for men's customary ways of judging human conduct, and that is what we are describing in this positive science.

The word 'ethics', although it is indirectly derived from a Greek word also meaning 'custom', has, by long technical usage, been limited to the normative science, the science which tells not what men actually do and actually think it right to do, but what men ought to do and what they ought to think it right to do. In the normative science of ethics, we study the standards by which we judge actions to be right and wrong, good and bad, or in the other ways mentioned in the first section of this chapter. From another point of view we ask what is the real meaning of these terms, right and wrong, good and bad, and the rest; once again we are not

asking what people think they mean when they use them; we are asking their true meaning or the only meaning in which they can be used correctly. Such an investigation will necessarily result in the discovery of standards or norms or criteria by which right actions can be distinguished from wrong actions or even better actions from good actions. The discovery and the establishment of such standards are the primary tasks of the normative science of ethics.

The word 'establishment' suggests that we cannot stop in ethics with merely stating the meaning or logical connotation of such terms as 'good' and 'right' and 'ought'. Even if a person knew fully the characteristics of action implied by these terms, he might still go on to ask: 'Why ought I to do what is right?' or 'Why ought I to avoid what is bad?' It may be the case that an adequate definition of the terms 'right' and 'ought' and 'bad' would supply the answers, but if that be the case, the definition itself often implies a certain view of the universe as a whole and of man's place in it. It is because of man's place in the universe that we can say that certain actions are right, or that he ought to do them. Even a philosopher who maintains that the meaning of ethical terms is not affected by the relations of our actions to anything else is still holding a certain metaphysical view of the universe, a view that he will need to defend in order to demonstrate that his ethical statement about goodness not being affected by relations is valid. Such a passage from science to philosophy has already been suggested when it was said that the normative sciences 'do not merely describe the standards by which we judge; they are also concerned with the validity or truth of these standards'. This surely means the place of these standards in the whole scheme of things. It is, for example, a question for philosophy or metaphysics to decide whether our judgements of right and wrong are merely customary opinions that are created by our human minds with no fixed objective basis, or whether they state truths about the ultimate constitution of the universe. We may somewhat arbitrarily limit the word 'ethics' to the science describing the standards, but the student of ethics will soon find that the description will develop into an investigation of the validity of the standards, and we may call this investigation 'moral philosophy',

the name by which ethics was most commonly denoted until recently in the older British universities. There can be no sharp division between ethics and moral philosophy; a more profound study of the normative science inevitably raises philosophical questions.

How far the standards of ethics can be used in ordinary practice to distinguish a right action from a wrong action will depend largely on the nature of these standards, but it has been a matter of common experience that there are cases where it is very difficult even for the man experienced in making moral judgements to tell which course of action is right. One of the most familiar examples is whether a doctor is right in answering a patient's question with a false answer, when he knows or thinks it extremely likely that a true answer will aggravate the patient's illness or even cause his death. The science of applying the standards of ethics to particular kinds of cases is properly called 'casuistry', and, however this science may have been misused in the past, the application of ethical standards to particular kinds of cases is in itself a perfectly legitimate and reasonable sphere for a science. The difficulties and dangers of this science of casuistry will concern us later. In the meanwhile we must note that we are still dealing with knowledge and not practice, with a science and not with an art. The fact that the truth as to what action is right in a particular situation does give valuable guidance to a person in that situation as to what he ought to do is not the direct concern of the casuist. His business is to reach true knowledge, not to alter practice. In this sense it is possible to admit with Dr. G. E. Moore[1] that casuistry is one of the goals of ethical investigation and yet to deny that the aim of ethics is to affect or improve our practice. It might be better to call casuistry applied ethics than to call it practical ethics, for knowledge applied in particular circumstances is still the primary aim.

There is, however, a body of knowledge collected with the special aim of guiding people in the practice of right conduct or the art of living the good life. We call such guidance 'moralizing', and moralizing is by no means confined to the student of ethics, or even to the moral philosopher. The

[1] G. E. Moore: *Principia Ethica*, Ch. 1, §iv.

moralizer has more often drawn his material from long practical experience of life than from text-books of ethics or moral philosophy; he is the sage or 'wise man', typically elderly in years, often without book-learning but rich in human experience. Such was the author of the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, or of the Analects of Confucius. Sometimes it is claimed that his moral maxims are due to direct supernatural inspiration; sometimes the man himself is thought to have a 'gift', an unusual inborn insight into such matters. The knowledge of ethics does have some value for the moralizer; it gives him knowledge of the nature of moral principles which can be applied in the particular cases in which he gives counsel, and a width of outlook which may help him to avoid bias and prejudice. It may indeed be the duty of the student of ethics to use his knowledge of ethical principles to engage in the 'time-honoured task of moralists at present very largely neglected, to preach and to edify, to inculcate new duties and devotions, or to make men profoundly conscious of old ones'.[1] Yet the student of ethics may admit that he lacks the more necessary qualifications for the task of moralizer such as the necessary gift of insight or the long experience of the ways of men with one another. The preacher and the educationist have certainly much to learn from ethics, but theirs is a different subject; we may call it practical ethics or moralizing, and it is a subject the aim of which is to affect and improve practical conduct.

There still remains to be considered the practice of doing right actions or what we may call the art of living the good life. Mackenzie thought that it was not correct to speak of conduct as an art,[2] but there are actually resemblances between good conduct and such fine arts as painting or music to which the phrase 'the art of conduct' draws attention.

(a) We learn to do what is right, as the artist learns to paint, not so much by a study of theory, as by long and painstaking practice. We may admit that the understanding of ethical principles is a help in the practice of goodness just as an understanding of the nature of beauty may be a help to the painter

[1] J. N. Findlay: *Morality by Convention* (Mind. N.S., Vol. LIII, p. 169).

[2] J. S. Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Ch. 1, iv.

in his art. At the same time the study of the great masters and the deliberate copying of their methods are of greater use than theoretic study in both good living and painting. And in both the chief secret of success appears to be practice.

(b) Good conduct and the arts both directly cause changes in the world outside of us. We make things around us different by doing good deeds just as the artist makes his canvas different by painting a picture on it. The knowledge of science and philosophy, of which ethics is one example, has no such direct effect on the world outside. Such knowledge does affect the mind of the knower and in so doing indirectly affects his outside activities, but conduct and the fine arts are themselves activities directly changing the objective material world. Their aim is action and not knowledge.

(c) Good conduct resembles the fine arts in either being or producing something which has in itself beauty or 'worthwhileness' comparable to the beauty of a work of art. A noble deed arouses in us something of the same type of admiration as that caused by a beautiful picture or a 'noble poem'. Sir Philip Sidney's gift of water to a dying comrade is a commonly cited example of this type of action.

There are, however, certain marked differences between good conduct and the fine arts, and Mackenzie was drawing attention to these when he denied that good conduct can be properly called an art.

(a) An art is concerned with one particular type of activity of a person, whereas good conduct is concerned with all a person's activities. The activity of the painter may be judged not only by the standards of art but by ethical standards; his picture though admittedly beautiful may be evil in its influence. The clever burglary may satisfy the standards of the burglar's craft but is none the less morally wrong.

(b) The artist may practise his art at some times and completely neglect it at other times, but the good man must practise goodness at all times. There can be no holidays in the moral life. Other arts share to some extent in this need of practice; a musician's neglect of practice will be a great

hindrance in his art, but even then he does not need to keep at his practising all his waking life. The really good man, however, must be good waking, sleeping or eating without any interlude.

(c) Good intentions are generally thought to have no relevance in the arts. We judge an artist not by what he intends to produce, but by what he actually produces, but in the sphere of morality we judge a man to be good if we believe that his intentions would have normally resulted in good actions, even although in actual cases circumstances have made the result different from the normal. We still give the credit of goodness to a man who has tried to save a child from drowning, although he has actually failed to rescue the child. We must not however exaggerate this difference between good conduct and the arts. A man and his intentions will stop being regarded as good if they repeatedly produce bad results or no results at all, and the supposedly good man whose actions always turn out badly will be treated with the same contempt as the artist who regards himself as great but never produces any pictures. At the same time there is no doubt that in judging in ethics we do take more account of the motives and intentions of the doer of the action than we do in judging works of art.

(d) An artist is a man who can produce a work of art; a good man is a man who not only can but does do good actions. At the same time, as we have already suggested, the artist who does not practise his art will soon lose the skill that makes him worthy to be called an artist. On the other hand many of the good man's capacities for goodness must remain undisplayed until a suitable opportunity for displaying them arises. The winner of the Victoria Cross may have been as brave a man in the days of peace, but only the dangers of a particular situation in war may give him the opportunity of displaying in action his own particular type of goodness. Here again the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. In both artist and good man capacities must be ready to show themselves in action when the opportunity arises.

Our conclusion is that, whether we decide to call the living of a good life an art or not, it is certain that to live rightly has some resemblances to the arts and some differences from them.

As long as we remember the differences there seems no reason why we should not refer to the art of good living.

There are then six moral disciplines (to use a term which may include science, philosophy and art): (1) *a positive science of morals*, describing men's moral standards in different countries and ages; (2) the normative science of *ethics*, stating valid moral standards; (3) *moral philosophy* examining the validity of these standards by determining their place in the universe as a whole; (4) *casuistry* or applied ethics applying valid standards to particular concrete cases; (5) *moralizing*, or practical ethics, a discipline having as its definite aim the improvement of conduct; and (6) the *art* or practice of living a good life. In this book we are concerned primarily with the normative science of ethics, but we shall almost certainly in our study raise questions which need to be answered by moral philosophy and we shall illustrate our ethical principles by concrete applications of the kind described in casuistry. We shall refer to the student of ethics as a moralist, although this word is often used for the moralizer as well.

§3. *The Data and Methods of Ethics*

The English philosopher, Locke, said in a famous passage: 'But God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures and left it to Aristotle to make them rational. . . . He has given them a mind that can reason without being instructed in methods of syllogizing.'[1] A similar remark might be made about man's powers of distinguishing right and wrong; God has not left it to the professors of ethics to make men discover the difference. It is not the business of the moralist to create moral standards out of nothing; he lives himself in a social environment where certain moral standards, however vaguely expressed and imperfect they may be, are accepted and these standards serve as his data or material. The value of the work of students of the positive science of morals, like Westermarck, is that they describe the standards that do exist now or have existed in the past accurately and systematically, and not with the inaccuracies and the bias that have been the common characteristics of travellers' tales. There certainly appear to be inconsistencies

[1] Locke: *Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, Ch. 17.

and contradictions in these established moral standards, although modern sociologists are of the opinion that these have been exaggerated by those who have failed to understand or describe them properly. It is the first business of the student of ethics to reveal these inconsistencies between generally accepted standards and to show how these can be removed without making more than necessary alterations in the accepted standards. The best way of doing this is to try to discover if any more general principles underlie these standards, and this is the next step in his method. He will do this very much in the way that the physical scientist discovers a law. His examination and classification of commonly accepted moral rules will suggest to his mind some hypothesis, for example, the hypothesis of the hedonists that the actions commanded by moral rules are all actions which cause pleasure. He will see whether this hypothesis holds generally, and he will apply it in particular cases with as varied circumstances as possible. If he finds a large number of cases, where men have regarded actions as good which clearly do not cause pleasure, he will modify or reject his hypothesis. If it appears likely to meet all cases when they are sufficiently understood, then he will accept the hypothesis.

So far, however, the moralist is still engaged in the task of the descriptive scientist, and his ethics remains a natural science. His aim is not to discover moral principles which, as a matter of fact, are accepted by all men; his aim is rather to discover moral principles which all men ought to accept, whether they actually do so or not. His task is the critical one of seeing which moral principles can survive examination. One step in that examination is that which we have already mentioned; the moralist compares existing moral standards to see if the inconsistencies between them can be removed by wider principles. There are, however, inconsistencies which cannot be removed; a great many people hold for example that monogamy is always and universally right, and that no circumstances whatever can make polygamy right. The moralist has then to do something for which natural science provides no method; he has to show either that monogamy is always right or that polygamy is sometimes right. The

fact that a majority of mankind regard monogamy as always right, or the fact that this view fits in better with the other moral opinions of most men may suggest its correctness, but they certainly do not prove its correctness.

It looks as if the moralist were left to decide the question by his own direct insight or intuition, and it is certainly the case that direct or intuitive judgement plays a far larger part in the normative sciences, and especially in ethics, than it does in the physical descriptive sciences. A thinker may, for example, *see* that monogamy is always right, and go on to maintain that he will never accept any argument which will admit of polygamy being right even in a single case. Or he may find it self-evident that by calling an action good we mean nothing else than that the action causes pleasure. We all of us, ordinary men and moralists alike, have such intuitions, and, as long as we have them, we must find a place for them in our ethical system. What the holder of an intuition often forgets is that there is nothing infallible about such an intuition. When two intuitions contradict one another, one is necessarily false, and this sometimes does happen. If by experience or ethical theory it is shown that an intuition leads to self-contradictory or absurd consequences, then it must be given up. This is the form taken by a good deal of debate on ethical matters. So long as the hedonist, for example, is ready to accept the consequences of his theory there is no refuting his theory. It is when his opponent can show him that hedonism leads to some consequence that the hedonist is not prepared to accept that the theory is shown to be false. A wider experience of life and a deeper understanding of the principles of ethics are likely to change a man's intuitions. Indeed, these are the only reasons why the intuitions of the moralist can deserve more respect than those of the ordinary man. The moralist himself will be the first to say that the intuitions of the common man, particularly if they are widely held, must be given due consideration, for the common man too has had his experience of life and has engaged in some reflection on moral matters, and so his intuitions are not to be despised. What seems however to be self-evident both to the common man and the moralist is not always true. We find this to be the case in other spheres than that of ethics;

to the ordinary man in the seventeenth century the impossibility of sending a message from England to America within five minutes was self-evident, but the modern inventions of telegraph and radio have changed all that. It is the special business of ethics to test our intuitions, both by their own consistency among themselves and by a critical comparison of our own intuitions with those of others, and especially with the intuitions which have found expression in widely accepted moral codes. Yet, even after such testing, the final judgements still appear to be intuitive; in the light of all our knowledge and experience we *see* that a certain course of action is right, or that a certain standard is universally valid. We begin our study of ethics with intuitions that are vague, prejudiced and inconsistent; we should end our study with intuitions that have established themselves by their coherence with one another, their relative alignment with the most generally accepted moral codes and the continued self-evidence with which they come to our minds after a wide and varied experience of life. Professor G. C. Field has pointed out that we do not begin a study of ethics with the more or less exact definitions with which we begin a study of geometry.[1] Just as we begin a study of zoology with a vague notion of what a spider is like and end with an accurate scientific description of each species of spider, so we begin ethics with vague intuitions of what is right and what is wrong, and should attain to clear insights into objective standards of rightness and wrongness.

It may be suggested that the analysis, which is used in the physical sciences, and which many moralists try to use in discovering the meanings of ethical terms, is not an appropriate method for ethical study at all. The goodness of a noble action, like the beauty of a great picture, depends so much on the action *as a whole*, that the picking out by analysis of qualities which are good simply ignores the real nature of the action's moral goodness. It may be argued in reply that such analysis leads in ethics as in other sciences to a fuller understanding, and that the essential thing is only that our final moral judgement should be made on the whole action and not on its analysed elements. Such a final judgement

[1] *The Place of Definition in Ethics.* Proc. Arist. Soc., 1931–32, p. 81.

must be intuitive, but it is an intuition modified by analysis and comparison.

When we have arrived at a consistent system of moral principles that appear to be self-evident, and most moralists would admit that they are not fully satisfied with their own systems, we may proceed in two directions. We may go in the direction of moral philosophy and show the validity of our principles by demonstrating their place in the nature of reality as a whole; or we may go in the direction of casuistry and show how these principles will be applied in the particular circumstances and conditions of our own lives.

§4. *The Uses of Ethics*

Ethics is primarily a part of the quest for truth and the motive for studying it is the desire for knowledge. In this respect it is more akin to philosophical subjects than the natural sciences where the practical applications are many and attractive. We naturally want to know the truth about things, and ethics aims at finding out the truth about something that is both interesting and important—the rightness and wrongness of human conduct. There is no guarantee that the man who understands by means of ethical study the difference between right and wrong will necessarily follow the right. A theatre audience is always amused at the unlettered man in a modern comedy who tries to save his scholarly brother from choosing evil courses by reminding him that he won a university prize in moral philosophy![1] In spite of the teaching of Socrates that knowledge is virtue, it is commonly recognized that a mere knowledge of ethical principles is not sufficient to keep anyone in the paths of virtue. It has already been said that the example of good men's lives and the training of practical experience are likely to be more effective influences in producing good conduct.

At the same time there is no reason to doubt that, if other influences are favourable, the knowledge of ethics will give some help in the pursuit of goodness. It may do so by way of casuistry; the student of ethics is more likely to be right in his application of moral rules to a particular case than the man who has an equal knowledge of the circumstances of the case

[1] Barrie: *What Every Woman Knows.* III.

but no knowledge of ethics. He is likely, among other things, to be less biased and more comprehensive in his outlook. And the chief value of ethics is not in the guidance it gives in particular cases, but in the development of width of outlook and seriousness of purpose in dealing with moral matters generally. These are qualities of outstanding and permanent value in the good man, and there is every reason to think that the student of ethics has more chance to attain them than the ordinary man.

Chapter II

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MORAL ACTION

§1. *Psychology as Explaining Conduct*

The business of psychology is to explain conduct, and not to judge it either by justifying it or by condemning it; to justify or to condemn is the business of ethics. By explaining an action, we mean the setting forth of its relations to other facts connected with it, and particularly to those mental processes which precede the action in the mind of the person doing it. We may say that these antecedent mental processes cause the action, so long as we remember that the causation by which mental processes produce bodily actions is likely to be somewhat different from the causation by which the physical events studied in physics and chemistry produce later physical events. While psychology cannot justify or condemn actions, it appears reasonable to think that the psychological explanation of an action may affect our ethical judgement of them; a simple example would be the weaker condemnation given to an act of violence when it is known that this was done after great provocation. This is the truth expressed in the French proverb,[1] 'Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner', although this tells only one side of the story. A fuller knowledge of the psychological factors in an action may sometimes increase rather than lessen our condemnation; telling lies with malicious intent is certainly worse than lying in ignorance.

There seem to be in our minds four types of mental process determining our conduct, and two of these are more important than the others for ethics. (a) There is a tendency in some ideas, perhaps in all ideas, to produce movements directly or automatically, and this is called the ideo-motor tendency. The thought of the cold wind blowing in at the door of my

[1] 'To understand all is to forgive all.'

study may make me rise automatically and move towards the door in order to shut it, without there being any conscious desire in my mind to do so. Indeed, the moment that I realize what I am doing, I may stop moving towards the door because I am now aware that I really desire fresh air more strongly than I desire greater warmth. Some psychologists think this ideo-motor tendency to be a basic principle of conation; others think that there is no such tendency at all, and that what we really have in our minds is a dim awareness of an intended result (such as greater warmth) confused with an anticipatory image of the means needed to produce that result (such as rising and closing the door). In this case the ideo-motor action is merely a desired and intended action that has become more or less habitual and unconscious by means of repetition. In any case, in so far as the ideo-motor action is automatic, it tends to be involuntary; it is only when conscious desire affects the action, as in my conscious desire for fresh air in the example, that the ideo-motor action becomes a voluntary action and so within the sphere of ethics. There is, however, one way in which the ideo-motor tendency, if there really be such a tendency, is important for the moral life. If ideas tend to realize themselves in actions, it is important for a man to have the right kind of ideas in his mind. This is the basis of St. Paul's exhortation, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'[1]

(b) We act most commonly because of our desires. We are hungry and desire food and so we eat; we are curious and desire knowledge and so we study. Desire is itself a developed mental process and, in view of its importance in moral action, it will be more fully considered in the next section.

(c) We may act because of unconscious mental tendencies. These are sometimes regarded as unconscious desires or wishes, which lead to action very much in the way that conscious desires or wishes do. We may mean by an unconscious desire, a desire which we have difficulty in observing in our minds or attending to, and in this case the word 'desire' is

[1] Philippians iv. 8.

appropriate, but the desire is not altogether unconscious. Such desires differ from fully conscious desires in another way; they are generally less controlled by ourselves and less influenced by the conventions of society, so that the phrase 'unconscious desire' suggests some primeval urge like that of sex. Whether such half-conscious urges should be regarded as desires or as unconscious mental tendencies, there certainly appears to be an unconscious regulation of our behaviour by factors in our mind; the movements of the sleep-walker are not determined by conscious desire, but they are in all probability determined by some cause within the mind. In so far as actions are produced by unconscious mental tendencies they are involuntary; it is the possibility of modifying them by conscious desire, even if it be the desire to be psycho-analysed, that gives them any degree of voluntariness they have, and so brings them into the consideration of ethics. As in the case of the ideo-motor tendency it is the possibility of desire intervening that alone makes the actions possible objects of moral judgements.

(d) We may act from a 'sense of duty' and to do so is usually regarded as the outstanding form of moral action. Many psychologists hold that the sense of duty is simply one of our many desires, a complicated one certainly, but not for that reason of a different kind psychologically from the others; in this case our analysis of desire generally will include this special form of desire. Others hold that here we have a new determining tendency, which is often labelled 'conscience', and this we shall study psychologically in our fourth chapter.

§2. *The Nature of Desire*

Desires depend on certain tendencies of our human nature which may be classified as (a) organic needs, (b) instincts and (c) general innate tendencies.

(a) *Organic needs* or *wants* are those human tendencies which are necessary for the continued existence and normal development of the body. We human beings share such needs with the lower animals and even with plants, for plants need food, moisture and air just as we do. In the case of plants and of at least the lower forms of animal life, such needs are probably

unconscious, and there are some cases where a need may be unconscious in a human being. In a state of illness the body may be in need of nourishment, but the patient may not feel hungry and so may be unaware that he is really needing food. Consciousness of such an organic need is called an *appetite*. In an appetite, as contrasted with the desire which is the normal development of an appetite in human beings, the craving is vague and not directed to any particular object. The most prominont feature of consciousness in an appetite is the strong unpleasantness of the appetite remaining unsatisfied and the pleasantness accompanying its satisfaction. The word 'appetite', like so many other psychological terms, is used ambiguously in common speech. Sometimes it merely points to the organic sensations which accompany an organic need, without implying any conative tendency or striving to satisfy the need; when we refer to hunger and thirst as appetites we sometimes merely refer to their organic sensations. Sometimes the word 'appetite' is used for desires that are fully conscious and for desires which are based on instincts as well as those based on organic need; we refer to the sexual appetite, although this is based on an instinct rather than an organic need, as it has just been defined. In psychology it is best to keep the word appetite for a strongly affective craving where there is no clear consciousness of the object satisfying the craving.

(b) McDougall defines an *instinct* as an inherited or innate psycho-physical disposition which determines its possessor to perceive and to pay attention to objects of a certain class, to experience an emotional excitement of a particular quality on perceiving such an object, and to act in regard to it in a particular manner, or at least to experience an impulse to such action.[1] The instinct of flight may be taken as an example; a man or one of the higher animals tends to perceive and to pay attention to a strange loud noise, to experience the emotion of fear on hearing it, and to run away from it or at least to feel an impulse to do so. Common speech does not put the same emphasis on the cognitive and particularly on the emotional sides of an instinct as McDougall does; we would still call the action of an animal in running away from a

[1] McDougall: *Social Psychology*, Ch. 2, p. 29.

strange noise instinctive even although we believed perception and attention (in the senses in which we use these terms of human activities) to be absent, and even although we believed the animal to be without conscious fear. The inherited disposition to act in a certain fixed way would be enough to make the action instinctive. In our human instinctive actions, there is probably always some consciousness of what we are doing, although this consciousness may vary from a dim craving very like that of an appetite to a clear purpose; the sex instinct is at work both in the vague restlessness of the boy reaching puberty and in the clear resolve of a man to win a certain woman as his mate. McDougall arranges the principal human instincts in this way: (i) the instinct of flight, (ii) the instinct of repulsion, (iii) the instinct of curiosity, (iv) the instinct of pugnacity, (v) the instincts of self-assertion and self-abasement, (vi) the parental instinct, (vii) the sex instinct, (viii) the gregarious instinct, (ix) the instinct of acquisition and (x) the instinct of construction[1]. We need not suppose that this list is complete, or that other psychologists may not make a different and better list. What is certain is that there are inborn in our human nature certain tendencies to actions of different types, which appear either at birth or at a later stage of normal development. These instincts probably all serve to preserve and protect the human organism or at least the human race, but, in experiencing an instinctive tendency, the individual is generally quite unconscious of this service. Under the influence of the gregarious instinct a man wants company; he does not consciously want the preservation of his life which may be the natural outcome of his gregarious tendencies. If an instinct has a biological purpose, that purpose is not the conscious purpose of the individual concerned; it may be a purpose of God or nature, but that is a matter for theology or metaphysics and not for psychology. Instincts are not mental processes or bodily activities which we can observe; they are dispositions to action, and the only way we can know of them is through the actions they produce. We know nothing whatever of their own nature, for they belong not to the order of scientific phenomena like desires and movements; they belong to the

[1] McDougall: op. cit., Ch. 3.

order of scientific hypotheses or assumptions like atoms in chemistry or the unconscious in psychology. (c) The *general innate tendencies* differ from the instincts in not being characterized by one particular feeling state or by a tendency to one particular mode of action. The kinds of action in which one general innate tendency may express itself are indefinitely variable. According to McDougall,[1] these include *sympathy* or the tendency to share the emotions of which we observe the expressions in others, *suggestibility* or the tendency to accept beliefs from others in the absence of logically adequate grounds for their acceptance, and *imitation* or the tendency of one individual to copy the movements and activities of another. Other general innate tendencies are the tendency to *play* and the tendency to *form habits* (that is the tendency for any action to be repeated more readily in virtue of its having occurred before). From the point of view of ethics, there are no important differences between the general innate tendencies and the instincts; the first three which we have mentioned, sympathy, suggestibility and imitation, are all bound up with the gregarious instinct.

In human beings at any rate there may be a less or greater consciousness of any one of these tendencies, appetites, instincts and general innate tendencies, and of the activity in which it will find satisfaction. We call this consciousness *impulse* or *desire*, and the word 'desire' implies a more definite consciousness than the word 'impulse'. In impulse there is a conscious tendency to some activity, but there need not be the clear picture in the mind of the satisfaction to be gained from the activity that we find in the more developed forms of desire; and, as we shall see later, desires are not commonly isolated but tend to be affected by other desires, while impulses remain more or less isolated conscious tendencies to action. The isolated impulse in the developed mind may take the form of an impulse to do some morally good action, and this impulse may in some cases be opposed to the general tendency of the desires of the agent. In such circumstances a person may even say that he had an impulse to do a right action, and that he was wrong to have acted differently. In such a case he may be referring to an intuition of the rightness of the

[1] McDougall: op. cit., Ch. 4.

action, rather than to an impulse, this intuition resembling an impulse in its arousing a tendency to action and in its being isolated from the main stream of ideas. We may define a desire as the conscious tendency to attain an object or to engage in an activity which may satisfy a particular want or fulfil a particular tendency of the agent. When a man is in want of food, he has the appetite of hunger, and he desires to eat food. When a man is thwarted in some activity in which he is engaged, his instinct of pugnacity is aroused and he desires to fight with and overcome the person thwarting his activity. The difference of a desire from an appetite or an instinctive craving is that it is directed towards a definite object and is more fully conscious. It is because of this fuller consciousness that a desire in its more developed forms becomes something more than a mere conscious need of some object; it becomes a conscious want that we still have in the light of our other conscious desires. The pious Mohammadan is almost certain to feel the appetite of hunger during Ramadhan, the month of fasting, but he may attain a stage where, in spite of his natural hunger, he cannot be said to have the desire to eat. The civilized man's desire for food differs from that of the animal or savage just in this respect that it is a desire modified by the influence of other desires, but still holding.

At the time we attain the object of a desire, this attainment is normally accompanied by a feeling of pleasantness in our minds, and so the thought of attaining the object will naturally share in the same feeling of pleasantness. When we desire we anticipate pleasure in the satisfaction of the desire, and so a pleasant feeling may come to be associated with the desire; the desire for a holiday may seem to be pleasant because of the anticipated pleasantness of the actual enjoyment of the holiday being associated with the desire. But the desire itself, abstracted from the prospect of its attainment, may vary greatly in its feeling tone according to its intensity and its circumstances. Intense hunger, for example, is always painful, but most people seem to find a stimulation of sexual desire pleasant even with no prospect of its satisfaction; this at any rate seems the most likely explanation of the pleasantness of certain items in cinema and music-hall programmes,

although some part may be played by the pleasantness of a satisfaction of the desire in imagination or fantasy. In any case it does not appear to be the pleasantness of the actual desire itself which impels the possessor of the desire towards activity, as some rather crude psychologies have suggested; the pleasantness or unpleasantness accompanying desire varies far too much for such a simple explanation.

As desires develop, there are various ways in which the original tendencies to action become more complicated. (1) The tendencies to action may be aroused by other objects, or even by ideas of other objects, than those which originally excited them. A child, for example, who shows the tendency to flight on hearing a loud noise, will come to show the same tendency at the sight of an animal or toy repeatedly shown to it along with the loud noise. Similarly a desire for an object may develop into a desire for the pleasantness which regularly accompanies the obtaining of this object. The two desires are by no means the same. The hungry man desires food and not merely pleasantness. This can be demonstrated by offering a hungry man music, which normally gives him intense pleasantness of feeling, instead of food. (2) The bodily movements in which our inborn tendencies find satisfaction may change and become more complicated. The violent blows by which the instinct of pugnacity expresses itself in a child change into the veiled threats or the sarcastic remarks of the grown-up person who has been thwarted by his rival. (3) Several of the innate tendencies may be aroused at the same time. A complex situation like that of a general election may arouse instincts of pugnacity, self-assertion, gregariousness and acquisition all at the same time. (4) A number of these tendencies may become more or less systematically organized around some particular object or idea. Around the idea of one's country there come in the individual tendencies of self-assertion in the form of pride in one's national achievements, of self-abasement before the greatness of one's country's past, of pugnacity against its enemies and so on. It is thus that there is formed the sentiment of patriotism, and in the developed moral life sentiments have a large place as moving forces. When such complications take place in full consciousness, and in conscious desire they tend to do so,

it is certain that our instinctive tendencies will sometimes conflict with one another, and if there is to be any harmony among our desires, weaker tendencies will have to make way for stronger ones. There is a tendency for our desires to form a more or less harmonious system in adult life. In childhood the conflicts are often avoided by the simple expedient of the child taking one desire at a time and satisfying it and then passing on to another, and parental authority often settles conflicts by a definite command, but most children have at some time or other conflicts of desire that prevent activity for a time and find their expression only in an outburst of tears. It is in the adolescent period, the period of storm and stress, that conflicts are often most sharp and most bitter. As we grow up, our desires find their place in a more harmonious system and this tendency is aided by the fact that the emotions which, according to McDougall, are the central parts of our instincts, tend also to group themselves in sentiments attached to particular objects. At first the systems or 'universes of desire' may only include limited ranges of our desires. In his business life a man will have one universe of desires with perhaps the desire to make money as the leading desire in that universe; in his Church life, he may be led by a different group of desires with perhaps the desire to do God's will as the predominant member of the universe; and during his month's summer holiday all the desires at work in his mind at the time may find a place in a system where the dominating desire is to get his golf handicap reduced. Some people seem to keep these different universes a good deal apart from one another all their lives; a man of this sort is very different in his home from what he is in his business, very different on holiday from what he is in working life. With some people, the various universes of desire become one single system; in Pope's words, 'one master passion in the breast, like Aaron's serpent swallows up the rest.'[1] This is the man whose whole course of life is determined by one clear purpose for good or for ill. With most people however there is no single dominating desire, but, in the experience of life, the various universes find a place in a coherent system where they do not too often or too violently come into conflict with one another.

[1] Pope: *An Essay on Man*, Ep. 2, §131.

When we attend to the conscious desires and the activities to which they lead, we are apt to speak, as we have been doing, of the harmonizing taking place among these desires or activities. It is however the common opinion that this harmonizing takes place chiefly among the dispositions leading to desires and actions, that is among the instincts and innate tendencies. In childhood, these tendencies seem to be more or less separate from one another, and each may be aroused to action by its own appropriate stimulus without, as it were, any reference to the others. In the development of the mind, our instincts develop into dispositions that may be called sentiments, although the word sentiment has perhaps too great a suggestion of emotion for our present purpose. What we mean here by a sentiment is a developed and organized tendency to activities of a complicated kind in response to a particular object to which our mind has certain emotional attitudes. The sex instinct may be aroused by the sight or thought of any woman; the sentiment of love is a permanent attitude to one woman only; and while the sex instinct is merely the one crude tendency to mate, the sentiment of love has in its sphere or 'universe' a great variety of tendencies, dominating, submissive, tender and creative. Even then the sentiments must in turn form a harmonious system, and this is what is meant generally by the development of character. Character is not something that we are born with, but something that we acquire by the development and particularly the harmonizing of our sentiments. The man with a single universe of desires dominant in his mind is the man of strong character, not necessarily the man of good character, for the dominant desires may be bad. The man of weak character is the man without any dominant sentiments to control his passing desires so that he is carried away by the desires of the moment without any consideration of the other universes of desires in his mind. A man's character will make him more sensitive to certain objects and ideas, those which appeal to his dominant systems of desires, and less sensitive to others. In thinking over his actions, he will be affected by the thought of certain consequences rather than others, for the former will be more akin to the objects of his dominant desires. What has been already said of instinct is

true of sentiment and character; these are not activities or occurrences; they are dispositions or tendencies to action, and we only know them through the activities they cause. Character designates an active disposition, tending to action, or rather the sum of our tendencies to action so far as these are united into one harmonious system.

§3. *Motive and Intention*

A motive may be defined as a conscious mental process which moves a man to act in a particular way, and with the possible exception of actions done from a sense of duty, actions done with a conscious process of willing have as their motives desires. It is my desire to eat food that moves me to go into a restaurant and order a meal. In desire itself however there appear to be two aspects, on the one hand the instinctive craving or urge *impelling* a man to action, and on the other hand the end or object at which he is aiming which is said to *induce* him to the action. The motive which impels a father to send his son to school may be from one aspect the parental instinct or parental affection impelling him to do so; from another aspect it is his aim of giving his son an education that will secure his full development and enable him to earn his living that induces the father to do so. It has been very common among moralists to attend to one of these aspects to the exclusion of the other, for example to suppose that an action impelled by a feeling of benevolence is good whatever the object aimed at, but in every willed action, both aspects of the motive are involved, and to speak as if one of them caused the action without the other playing any part is an abstraction which may lead to a false judgement of the whole action. There may be lower levels of action where a man is carried away by feeling and acts blindly without considering the end or result of his action. Such actions are called impulsive actions, and they come into the sphere of ethics because by thinking of the consequences we could have acted differently.

The consciousness of the consequences of an action varies from a vague awareness of some object, as when a child runs from some strange animal towards his mother, to a well-thought-out plan or policy where a man has a scheme of

action covering a number of years and thinks of all the possible consequences of his plan, as when a man accepts an appointment for a number of years in a foreign country. This whole willed scheme of action, as anticipated by the doer of it, is called his intention. It includes as one part of it the aim or object which has been referred to as the inducement aspect of the motive, the direct object of the agent's desire, but the feeling or emotion impelling the agent to action is not regarded as part of the intention. If we suppose that the motive which impels Jones to take an appointment in West Africa is acquisitiveness, with making money as its conscious object, the acquisitiveness of Jones is not part of the intention, but the making of money is the principal part of the intention. It must be noted, however, that if the motive as a concrete whole were not present, that is, if Jones lacked the acquisitiveness which leads him consciously to desire money, the whole intention or plan of action would disappear. A man's intention refers to the outside world, the world of anticipated results as they are foreseen by the agent; the motive refers to the state of the agent's own mind, the spirit in which the action is done rather than the consequences of the action, although a fully conscious motive has an aim which indicates the spirit of the action; the aim of getting money indicates an acquisitive spirit. In his intention, the agent must plan to do many things which he has no desire to do. Jones, motivated by the desire to make money, must have as parts of his intention, not only the conscious aim of making money, although that is likely to loom largest in his mind, but also the discomforts of an unhealthy climate, the separation from friends and possible unfitness for employment later in his own country, none of which he desires at all. Nor can we regard the other parts of the intention simply as related to the motive in the relation of means to end; Jones certainly puts up with the disadvantages of employment in West Africa as a means to make money, but the motive is something more; it is the dominant driving power throughout a scheme of action determining the spirit of the whole series of activities, rendering some consequences of these activities attractive and others dissatisfying to the doer of the action. The intention, as a foreseen scheme of action, is capable of almost indefinite

elaboration, varying with the imagination of the agent and his knowledge of probable circumstances. Some of the distinctions made by Mackenzie among the different parts of intention have their main use in showing the elaborate nature of intention.[1] We may distinguish between the *immediate* intention and the *remote* intention of an action. Two young men may have the same immediate intention of enlisting in the army, but the one has the remote intention of earning large sums of money, while the other has the remote intention of sacrificing his career for the welfare of his country. We may again distinguish between the '*direct*' intention of an act, which is the aim aspect of the motive, as, for example, Jones's aim of making money, and the '*indirect*' intention or undesired consequences which are anticipated, as, for example, the disadvantages to Jones of life in West Africa.

Modern psychologists often write of 'unconscious motives' to action, and Mackenzie even mentioned 'unconscious intention'.[2] It is more convenient to limit the words 'motive' and 'intention' to conscious mental processes. The new psychology has given us strong reasons to think that unconscious mental processes play a large part in determining our actions, and it is evident that our behaviour is not always fully explained by the motives and intentions consciously present in our mind. In so far as such determining factors are unconscious they are outside our control and so not of direct interest to ethics. The public benefactor may suppose that the only influence determining his conduct is the conscious motive of helping suffering mankind, and he may be perfectly honest in his supposition, but the modern psychologist tells us that there may be at work in the benefactor's mind an unconscious tendency to dominate his fellow-men.

It is sometimes argued that 'motives' cannot be included among the voluntary activities which are judged in ethical judgements, because a man cannot change his own motives or desires. It is true that if, at a particular moment, the desire for food is in a man's mind, he may not be able there and then to replace that desire by another, but none the less, a good

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 2, ii.

[2] Mackenzie: op. cit., p. 49 (6th Edition).

deal of moral training consists in the development and modification of motives; the pious Mohammadan, for example, learns not to desire food during the month of fasting. When the motive is actually operative in the mind, it may not be possible to get rid of it on that particular occasion, and then, by his volition, the agent chooses to carry out or to refrain from the action to which the motive leads; his choice will be one factor which either helps or hinders the recurrence of the particular motive. In the developed character, as we have already seen, certain motives have become habitually predominant, and the agent's own past choices have been important factors in determining which of his motives have become master motives.

In his desire to state things simply, the psychologist is apt to speak as if each action were determined by one single motive acting by itself, but of course this is almost never the case. Even in very simple activities, many factors, both conscious and unconscious, are likely to be at work in the agent's mind before he acts, and to analyse these factors is often a task beyond the ingenuity of the psychologist. It would be false, for example, to say that a man's only motive in seeking a post with a larger salary is the desire for money. He probably at the same time wants to assert himself in a wider sphere, to exercise more widely his social and other gifts, to gain the companionship of a wife or to give better opportunities to his children, and these desires are likely to spring from tendencies other than his acquisitive instinct.

A man's desires, in their office of being motives, often conflict with one another. Mackenzie called the desire which emerges successful from such a conflict a 'wish';[1] but, in common speech, 'wish' and 'desire' have much the same meaning. A man desires both to make money for himself and to engage in some public service, which implies self-sacrifice, and at the moment the two desires point to different lines of action and so are in conflict with one another. Now each of these desires belongs to a larger system or universe of desires. The desire of the man to make money may have associated in the same universe with it the desire to give ease to his wife, to make a good provision for his children, and to

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics,* Book I, Ch. 1, p. 7.

display his superiority over his business rivals. The desire of the man for self-sacrificing service may have associated in the same universe with it the desire to help others, the desire to show himself of superior character, the desire to give pleasure to those whose opinion he values, the desire for social reform and the desire to do the will of God. It is this fact that makes the statement, that the strongest motive always wins, meaningless, for the strongest motive may mean the strongest single motive (which perhaps never occurs alone), or the motive belonging to the strongest universe of desires. Indeed, as we shall suggest in the next section, in a deliberate action, the winning motive does not only bring to its aid the strongest universe of desire; it has, in some way or other, now got on its side the mind or character as a whole, and the accomplishment of this is what is commonly called willing.

§4. *The Process of Willing*

In an impulsive action, such as the sudden striking of his opponent by a man in a rage, the strongest desire of the moment directly determines the action. In the case of deliberate action there is a process of choice or willing between the desire and the action. Deliberation and choice occur when two desires conflict; in the case of the man consciously striving to do what is right there may be two obligations which he desires to fulfil that cannot both be fulfilled at the same time, or there may be a strong desire that is in conflict with the desire to do his duty. The choice itself is a conative process, which is commonly preceded by the intellectual act of making a judgement or series of judgements; it is when there is a series of judgements that we use the word deliberation. In making a choice we are not merely judging which of our desires is the strongest, for to do so would often be a piece of introspective analysis which is beyond the capacity of the ordinary man or even of the skilled psychologist. What we appear more commonly to be judging is that the result of the action motivated by one desire in our mind is more attractive than the result of an action motivated by another desire in our mind. The injured man, for example, may deliberately control his impulse to strike his enemy because he sees that the result of his doing so would be an advantage

to his enemy, while the giving of a soft answer would have the more attractive result of an advantage to himself. From another point of view choice cannot be merely another name for desiring more strongly, for choice always implies a second step, which desiring alone does not imply. This step is to make up our minds to set about attaining one particular end among those that seem desirable to our mind at the moment. This means that we resolve to take whatever means are necessary to reach the desired end. After this, we have to take the further step of discovering by deliberation what particular means are most desirable for attaining the end chosen, and we resolve to take these means. And even after this, we have still to put out the exertion to take the first step in bringing these means into action. It would be wrong to suppose that, in every choice, the chooser deliberately attends to each of these steps; there are countless varieties of action between impulsive and fully deliberate actions. All that we can say is that the chooser can, if he so desire, consciously take each of these steps.

The first step then in willing is the judgement of the attractiveness of one end as compared to another, and we may ask, attractiveness to whom or to what part of the mind? Our answer will vary with the degree to which the action is impulsive or the degree to which it is deliberate. In the case of the purely impulsive action we have already seen that it is to one isolated desire that the action appeals, and the agent carries out the action without making any judgement at all. In a slightly more complicated case, although one impulse may dominate the mind, there may still be a choice of means. The angry man may at the moment seem to have his whole mind occupied by hostility to his enemy and yet decide that striking his opponent is not the most attractive form of action; he can get the better of him more effectively in some other way. If, however, along with the hostility, other universes of desire are at work in the man's mind, the most attractive result may appear to be one that is not at all attractive to the one impulse of anger; it may be reconciliation and co-operation brought about by patient waiting and effort for mutual forgiveness. It is not the case that the end which is more attractive to the wider group of desires is necessarily

that which is morally better, as some moralists seem to suggest. The burglar carried away by a strong impulse of pity might abstain from his crime, but if he lets the larger part of his character, which we may call his professional self, come into action, he may decide to go on with the burglary. So willing appears to be a matter of degree depending on the extent to which the whole of an individual's desires are involved in the action. An action is fully a willed action when the whole character of the doer is involved in it. The essential mark of volition or willing is that the character or the personality as a whole, or, as Laird put it, 'the controlling organization of selfhood' as contrasted with its 'subordinate incidental portions'[1] is thrown upon the side of one motive. One of these subordinate incidental portions may be responsible for a particular desire or impulse, but in willing the whole self has become responsible. What is characteristic of willing is not the idea being consciously present in our mind that our whole self is on the side of this action; what makes an act a willed act is the fact that the self has accepted the action as its own, whether the self has been conscious of doing so or not.

The choice of an end is followed by the choice of means to bring about the desired end. In making this choice we need to consider the likelihood with which a particular means will produce the desired end, the amount of the end that it is likely to produce because not every amount of the desired end may be desirable, the attractiveness or unattractiveness of the means themselves, for a means may appear to be so undesirable in itself as to lead us to give up the whole plan of action, and the likelihood of our being able to bring about the means. Of course the agent does not actually consider all these factors in every case of choice of means, but it is possible to consider them all, and, only when the agent does so, can we say that his choice is fully deliberate. A general, whose desired end is the total defeat of his enemy, may consider aerial bombardment as a means to this defeat, and may ask these questions about it: 'Is aerial bombardment likely to bring about total defeat?' 'Will the defeat so produced be total or partial, so leaving it possible for the enemy to gain

[1] Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 142.

some other advantage?' 'Is aerial bombardment so undesirable in view of its inflicting injuries on civilians as not to be employed as a means of victory?' 'Have we the resources in aeroplanes, bombs and trained airmen available, so that it is practicable to use this means of defeating the enemy?'

In our deliberation on means we will discover the first step to take towards the attainment of the chosen end. People vary very much in their ability to take this step. Some people seem to find it extremely difficult to make the necessary self-exertion required for action to begin, and there is a mental abnormality called 'abulia' which is an extreme form of such difficulty. Other people have a tendency to rush into action without completing the process of deliberation; they seem to find deliberation irksome and action congenial. It is characteristic of the man of developed good character that he learns to know the appropriate amount of deliberation in any situation, and the right moment at which to make the necessary self-exertion. We shall see later that when we talk of action in ethics it is generally this self-exertion that we mean; the outward movements produced by this self-exertion are generally determined to some extent by other circumstances than our own willing, and so are less suitable as objects of our moral judgements.

§5. *Psychological Hedonism*

A theory of psychology that has had a great influence on ethical thought is the view that the sole object of human desire is pleasure. Men may appear to seek such other things as wealth or learning or virtuous characters, but actually they are seeking such things as means to getting pleasure. This theory of psychological hedonism is, we must remember, a description of human nature learned by empirical observation and not, like ethical hedonism (with which it has been often confused), an ethical theory or a statement of what men ought to seek. It follows that the only way to refute psychological hedonism is to show that there are some normal human beings who seek other things than pleasure. It is no proof of psychological hedonism to show that there are certain individuals who do seek pleasure or even that there are certain individuals, who, when they appear to be seeking other ends

like knowledge, are really seeking them as means to their own pleasure. What the psychological hedonist needs to show is that *all* men in *all* their activities are seeking pleasure and nothing but pleasure, and few intelligent people will accept this, however ready they are to admit that many people do so on many occasions. What must be shown in order to refute psychological hedonism is that, however many people seek pleasure, some people on some occasions do not do so. Nor does it prove psychological hedonism to show that in every individual there is a natural tendency to seek his own pleasure. The American realist, Holt, bases this on the physiological fact that a stimulated part of a body reflexly seeks more stimulation for itself.[1] It need not be doubted that there is such a fundamental tendency in human nature, but what the psychological hedonist would need to prove is that this is the *only* tendency determining human action.

Theoretically there may be three forms of psychological hedonism, but the first two of these are not at all plausible. (a) The pleasantness of desire at the moment of desiring may be the factor which determines action. The desire of a starving man for food may be extremely painful and yet be a desire most likely to produce action. (b) A man always does what gives him most pleasure at the moment to do. This might explain the action of the starving man in striving to get food, but it is obvious that we sometimes do actions which do not give pleasure at the moment; for example, we go to the dentist for the painful business of having a tooth extracted. (c) The motive that determines action is always the desire for some future pleasure. This is the most reasonable form of psychological hedonism and the theory that is generally denoted by this name.

There are, however, several good reasons for considering psychological hedonism even in this most reasonable form to be false.

(i) The strongest argument against psychological hedonism is that from introspection. When we desire, we are not always consciously desiring pleasure. We may be desiring food or music or exercise without any thought of the pleasant

[1] Holt, from: *American Philosophy To-day and To-morrow*, pp. 187–189.

feeling that their attainment will bring us. It is true that the satisfaction of our desires for these things is normally accompanied by pleasant feeling, so much so that in some cases we refer to the objects which satisfy our desires as pleasures; we talk of such things as music and food as the pleasures of life, and we even refer to the meeting with a friend as a pleasure. Yet it is evident that what we desire is not merely the pleasant feeling, but the object arousing it. However much we may love music and get pleasure from listening to it, music will not satisfy us if what we desire at the moment is food.

(ii) Even in the animal world a mother animal will endure pain and sacrifice her life for the sake of her young. When a human mother engages in similar conduct the psychological hedonist maintains that she does so for the sake of future pleasure, either so that she may enjoy later the society of her child or that she may save herself from the painfulness of remorse, or even that she may give herself a momentary thrill of satisfaction over her extreme sacrifice on behalf of her child. Even if we admit that all human self-sacrifice could be explained by such explanations, it does not follow that these are the only possible explanations of it; explanation by a natural instinct to sacrifice oneself in certain circumstances would be a still more plausible explanation. To transfer the explanations given by the psychological hedonist to the animal world would suggest a far higher level of development in the animal world than we have any scientific grounds for accepting, and it would seem a simpler and more reasonable view to hold that the aim of the mother, whether animal or human, is to save her young from danger; the discovery that there is pleasure even in such self-sacrifice is something which comes later.

(iii) Maternal self-sacrifice is only one case of what we may suppose to be a general rule that wants come before satisfactions. This would appear to be true in the biological evolution of conduct. Plants and the lower forms of animal life have needs or wants, for example of air and moisture, but there is no evidence that they have any consciousness of these wants or their satisfaction, so that in no sense can they be said to desire pleasure. From these unconscious wants there seems to be a gradual development through dim

appetites to conscious desires, the satisfaction of which is certainly accompanied by pleasant feeling. The same would appear to be the order of development in the case of certain desires in the individual human being. The child seems to have an innate tendency to imitate the activities of grown-up people. A boy imitates the grown-up activity of smoking and generally on the first occasion finds it extremely unpleasant, but imitative and self-assertive tendencies cause him to persist in the activity until it gives him satisfaction. The psychological hedonist may here argue that the boy persists because he argues that grown-up people must find smoking exceedingly pleasant, but his first unhappy experience would be sufficient reply to this argument if the boy were influenced merely by the desire for pleasure, and there were no other innate tendencies urging him to persist in the activity. Again an activity like killing one's neighbour is in all probability naturally unpleasant; it is only when a man has determined from motives of envy or vengeance to kill his neighbour that it will give him pleasure to do so. There are certain experiences like the satisfaction of the bodily appetites and the enjoyment of perceiving beautiful objects which are so universally pleasant that it is plausible to accept the view of the psychological hedonist that men desire these experiences for the sake of the pleasure they give. The other things that give us pleasure, and there are many of these in human life without taking such an extreme example as an angry man killing his neighbour, depend on our having desired them beforehand, and not on their own intrinsic pleasantness.

(iv) An argument which suggests but by no means demonstrates the falsity of psychological hedonism is known as the 'paradox of hedonism'.[1] Sidgwick pointed out that the best way to get pleasure is to forget it. The player of a game who is continually thinking of the enjoyment that he is getting out of the game will probably miss that enjoyment to a great extent, while the player who gives all his mind to the playing and winning of the game gets the fullest enjoyment out of it. This is one example of a law which has long been known to psychologists that attending to an affective state so modifies that state as to lessen or even destroy its pleasant or

[1] Sidgwick: *The Methods of Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 4.

unpleasant quality. It is possible, however, for people without attending all the time to the pleasantness of their experiences to make the attainment of pleasure their aim, and such people do get a great deal of enjoyment in spite of the paradox of hedonism. It would be foolish to suppose that because men aim at other things than pleasure they never aim at pleasure at all. And the psychological hedonist might argue that men are intelligent enough to take the paradox of hedonism into account in their inevitable pursuit of pleasure. The argument provided by the paradox of hedonism is that, if psychological hedonism be true, it is difficult to explain why there should have been such a strange development as that implied by the paradox of hedonism. If we accept the other view that desires may be for many different objects and activities, then it would be in accordance with what psychology teaches us about association or conditioning that the desire for pleasure should need frequently to be reinforced by the conscious desire for the object or activity which originally gave the particular pleasure. It is to this necessity that the paradox of hedonism calls attention.

It is this fact of association or conditioning which gives such plausibility as it has to psychological hedonism. In the case of hunger, for example, we have a want for nourishment and the satisfaction of this want is accompanied by strong pleasantness. When the satisfying of this want has been repeated many times, and especially when the bodily need of nourishment is so regularly supplied as no longer to require attention, we may come to desire consciously the associated pleasantness rather than the nourishment, and there is little doubt that we often eat for the sake of pleasure rather than of nourishment. This happens most conspicuously in the cases of eating and drinking and gratifying the sexual instinct, but it may happen in the case of any desire. Even the philosopher may come to study for the sake of the pleasure that his studies give him rather than for the sake of attaining knowledge which was his original aim. And our motives are in most cases so complex that in almost every case the desire for pleasant experience may be one factor in our motive; it is not the only factor as psychological hedonism alleges.

Our conclusion is that we do not desire things because they

give us pleasure; on the contrary, they give us pleasure because we desire them. The idea of climbing a mountain, for example, is pleasant only if there is already a desire to do so in our minds. The fact that we do a thing because we ourselves desire to do it does not mean that all our desires are selfish, as psychological hedonists suppose. We may have an entirely unselfish desire for such an object as our neighbour's success, and the satisfaction of that desire may give the unselfish man more pleasure than his own promotion. What makes a man selfish is not the fact that the satisfaction of his desires gives him pleasure, but the kinds of objects which give him pleasure and the kinds of desires that he has in his mind. The well-being of others may be what a man desires most and what gives him most pleasure, and this is just what we mean by calling the man unselfish.

§6. *Reason as Motive to Action*

Aristotle[1] held that the end or aim of the willing process is always set by our desires, and that the work of reason is to deliberate about means and not ends. Similarly the Scottish philosopher, Hume, argued that 'reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions'.[2] The ends or objects that we seek are, according to this view, determined only by our desires and the business of reason or the cognitive part of mind is merely to determine the best means for satisfying these desires. Psychological hedonists are bound to hold this view; pleasure is the only object at which we can aim, and so reason and intelligence can only be used to guide us in the most efficient ways of getting pleasure. It appears to be one of the limitations of the scheme of instincts taught by McDougall and other modern psychologists that their theory suggests a similar function for the intellect. The ends at which we aim are determined by our innate tendencies or instincts; reason assists us in discovering the best means for the attainment of these ends.

Certain considerations suggest that this view is false and that reason has some part to play as a motive to action. (i) Among our innate tendencies there is in man at any rate the

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VI. Ch. 2 (1139a).

[2] Hume: *Treatise on Human Nature*, Bk. II, Pt. III, Ch. 3.

desire to be consistent and to avoid contradiction—what we may call the desire to be rational. This desire seems to play a very important part in the development from the isolated instincts of the child to the unified consistent character of the fully developed man, and it is likely to play some part in any fairly complex motive. The burglar, who is disturbed by a pang of pity while robbing a safe, is likely to pull himself together with the argument that it is foolish to be carried away by 'sentiment' and that it is reasonable to stick to his professional activities. (ii) It has already been shown that in a consciously willed action, judgements are made as to the attractiveness of one end as compared with another. Even if we allow that the main factor in determining attractiveness is the appeal of the end to one or more of our instinctive tendencies, yet the making of a judgement is primarily a cognitive process in which reason does play some part. There are, of course, voluntary actions like habitual or even reflex movements where there is no conscious willing with its implied judgements, and in these cases there may be no question of reason serving as a motive. (iii) In the developed character it is impossible to isolate the cognitive, affective and conative aspects of mind. In determining an action the mind works as a unity, and it would be a false abstraction to suppose that the affective and conative aspects of mind determine an action without any reference to the cognitive or rational aspects of mind. (iv) Reasoning, even the abstract kind of reasoning that we use in philosophical study, may suggest a course of action, and to that extent be a determining factor in action. The student of economics, for example, may in his purely intellectual investigation frame theories which suggest possible plans of action. It is true that something more may be needed before these plans are actually carried into effect, such as a desire for increased national wealth or the dislike of some economic evil, causing pain to the economist's mind, but no one can deny that, in producing the consequent activity, abstract economic reasoning has been one factor. Hume himself admitted that reflection may arouse a desire by causing us to think about some desirable thing[1] (as when a student of ancient history has suggested to him by his

[1] Hume: *Treatise on Human Nature,* Bk. III, Pt. I, Ch. 1.

historical studies the desirability of visiting Greece), and that reflection may sometimes weaken a desire by showing us the worthlessness of the objects of that desire (as when religious contemplation weakens our worldly ambitions). (v) It is likely that those who hold that reason always deals with means confine reason to logical inference, either of the deductive or the inductive variety. In that case it certainly would be difficult to suppose that reason could tell us the end or objects at which we should aim. There are, however, two other possible functions of reason.[1] (a) Reason may provide the mind with what are called *a priori* concepts, that is, notions which are not learned by experience but are in some way or other given by the mind itself. Many people hold for example that the idea that we *ought* to do a certain action is such an *a priori* concept and that such a notion, apart from any desire to do the action, impels us to do it. (b) Reason has the function of intuitive induction, that is, the function of seeing the universal rule involved in particular instances without the methods of experiment and hypothesis which are analysed by inductive logic; the seeing of the universal principle is direct and intuitive. Moralists may hold that reason can so discover not merely laws as to what does happen, but laws as to what ought to happen, and these may serve as motives determining our conduct. (vi) Introspection suggests that we are able to suspend our judgement, so that when in the course of deliberation an activity is judged to be the most attractive, it is possible to delay action until the reflective part of our mind has attended to other considerations which may influence our judgement. The man who has written an angry letter, however attractive the sending of it may be, may leave it in his desk until the next morning, and by that time rational considerations will have made the sending of it less attractive. Similarly reasonable ideas do seem to have the power of driving unprofitable ideas from the mind, and the result will be that a different course of action will appear more attractive.

The importance of this discussion for ethics is that it leaves open the possibility that our actions may be determined by a 'sense of duty' or by conscience, or even by an understanding

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 105.

of the principles of ethics. It has indeed been suggested that, for the good life, reason should be the only motive determining our actions. Socrates, the founder of Western philosophy, maintained that knowledge is virtue, as if a clear understanding of what is good would inevitably overcome all other tendencies to action and so lead to right conduct. It seems a truer observation of human nature to say that often we see the better but follow the worse. We shall however leave the psychology of the moral judgement to our fourth chapter; for the present, we have established that reason may have some place in determining the ends at which we aim and our actions leading to them.

§7. *The Freedom of the Will*

Modern psychology, particularly in the two schools of behaviourism and psycho-analysis, tends to teach that human activities are entirely determined by events taking place beforehand, just as physical science seems to teach that events in the physical world are completely determined by antecedent physical events. It is often held that such a view denies the freedom of the will and leaves no place for the science of ethics. It certainly appears to leave very little scope for the moralizer. It would be absurd to tell anyone that he ought to do a certain action at a particular moment when previous events have already made it inevitable that he is to do another action at this moment. The moralizer's only justification can then be that his exhortation is a new antecedent event so powerful as to cause a change in the course of events. Even if we accept the view that our actions are completely determined by antecedent causes, it may be possible to continue making ethical judgements very much in the way that we make judgements about the beauty or ugliness of natural scenery or about the 'goodness' or 'badness' of different kinds of motor engines. What would seem inappropriate in the case of conduct so inevitably determined by preceding events would be to praise or blame those engaged in such conduct. As a matter of fact the scientific student of ethics has always been more careful than either the ordinary man or the moralizer in bestowing praise and blame. Even if conduct be completely determined, we can still judge conduct

to be good or bad; only our judgements will be different in nature from what they are commonly thought to be, for they will be of the same kind as the judgements we pass on good or bad machines. Ethics will become a different science, but it will not be an impossible science. The argument sometimes used that man's will must be free if we are to make any moral judgements at all about his conduct, is not valid. All that the determinist view implies is that our moral judgements are different from what most people think them to be, but this is probably true in any case, for the scientific view of the moral judgement is very different from the common view. As a matter of fact, in common speech we still call a man good although we may believe that his goodness is largely due to a good heredity and a good upbringing.

There are two views on the causation of our actions which are obviously false. (a) The view of fatalism holds that our choices make no difference whatever to events in the outside world. It is a matter of common observation that our choices do make differences in the outside world. If in an airport I choose to enter an aeroplane bound for America the objective result will be different from what it will be if I choose to enter an aeroplane bound for Australia. If it is true that our actions are always determined by preceding events it is by these events affecting our choices not by their changing our actions and their results in spite of our choices. (b) The other false view is that our actions are determined directly and entirely by causes outside our own bodies. This is not even true of causation in the physical world. The effects of a bomb will depend not only on the nature and explosive force of the bomb but on the materials of which the building is made and on the way in which they have been put together. The sight of the door of the public-house produces very different effects in the habitual drunkard and in the temperance reformer; it 'causes' the drunkard to go in and have a drink, while it 'causes' the temperance reformer to pass by on the other side with a strong feeling of revulsion. When one Indian leader said recently of another that his mind was enslaved by British domination, he evidently thought that British domination had not had the same effect on his own mind, because his

own mind had a different constitution from that of his political rival. If there be such a thing as free choice it would appear to consist in a man being able to choose which of his outside circumstances will determine his conduct. If, on the other hand, the actions of a man are entirely determined by preceding events, these events must include events inside the agent as well as outside events; in other words, a man's actions must be determined by his character as well as by his circumstances. It must be remembered, however, that even for the strongest believer in free will outside circumstances are still relevant for conduct. The man who ignores outside circumstances in his actions so as to attempt to walk across a deep river is showing himself to be a madman and not a free man.

The real point under debate is whether our actions are determined by invariable antecedents so that any difference in our action would necessarily imply some difference in the antecedent events, or whether somewhere in the chain of antecedents there is an event that cannot be traced to a cause or an event the cause of which might have been followed by some other effect than that which actually occurs. In the former case a person with a complete knowledge of the preceding events would always be able to predict what an agent will do on a particular occasion; in the latter case no such certain prediction is even theoretically possible. The former view is called determinism and maintains that the law of causation holds in the case of human actions just as it does in the case of physical events. Sir David Ross expresses the law of causation thus: 'For every variation between two events there must be some variation between the antecedent circumstances, without which the variation between the events would not have taken place.'[1] The latter view is called indeterminism, which maintains that a motive to a human action or some part of it may come into existence at the moment of willing, which is not the necessary result of anything that has been in existence before. The only reasonable form of determinism is that which holds that our actions are directly determined not only by causes outside our bodies, but by causes within the body, in particular by what we have called our characters. This is called self-determinism.

[1] W. D. Ross: *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 214.

The following are the chief arguments in favour of self-determinism:[1]

(a) The modern scientific outlook implies determinism in the physical world and when this outlook has been adopted by the psychologist in behaviourism and psycho-analysis, a similar, although hardly an identical, determinism has been found there. Or in simpler words, science requires that events can be explained in terms of previous events, and if this is not true in the case of mind then the scientific study of mind is not possible. Modern discoveries in physics, while they do not show that there is indeterminism in the physical world as they are sometimes alleged to do, do show that even in the physical world causation is more complicated than the ordinary man imagines and, to that extent, they leave possibilities, both in the physical and mental world, of causation being very different from that suggested by the simple view that the same cause always produces the same effect. In any case the argument by analogy between physical causation and mental causation like all other arguments by analogy is not a reliable argument. Moreover, most determinists would admit that causation in the mental world is very different from that in the physical world. To take one difference as an example, when several forces are at work together in the physical world, there is a law by which these forces are combined, so that in the effect produced each cause at work plays its part. On the other hand, when a number of conflicting motives affect the mind, we have no psychological law to tell us what exactly will be the effect produced, but it appears that by the act of choice some of the motives concerned lose all power of producing any effect, so that the effect is the result of some of the motives and not of a combination of them all. When I decide to study philosophy instead of economics my previously strong desire to study economics seems now quite inoperative and has almost no part in determining my course of study. What modern science suggests is that, if causation be universal, it has many different forms so that human actions may be determined by antecedent events in a very different way from that in which

[1] Many of the following arguments for self-determinism and indeterminism occur in Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*, Ch. 8.

physical events are determined. Indeed, the determinist may go on to say that, when the ordinary man talks of 'free will', he is merely describing a type of causation where the causes at work are predominantly inside the agent and where the agent is conscious of these causes at work within himself. According to this view a man is not free when he is carried away by an impulse, as when the sight of his enemy makes him strike impulsively; he is only free when his action is determined by the inner tendencies of his being as a whole, as in the deliberate choice to study philosophy instead of economics. In reality both actions are determined; but the impulsive action is determined chiefly by the outside stimulus, while the deliberate action is determined by the inner character of the agent.

(b) In the physical world we connect the determination of events by antecedent causes with the ability to predict events; when a meteorologist foretells the weather accurately we believe that the weather is determined by antecedent causes and that the meteorologist knows these causes. The fact that we are able to tell what is going to happen shows that we know that these future events are causally connected with events that have already taken place. Now in the case of mental events, while it is difficult to predict what a person of undeveloped character will do in any situation, we can and do predict with fair accuracy what a man of stable, developed character will do. We say that we can depend upon such a man acting in a certain way in a certain situation. This would suggest that the conduct of the man of developed character, to whom we are ordinarily most ready to attribute free will, is more determined than the conduct of the impulsive child or undeveloped character. According to self-determinism, his conduct is determined by the inner conditions of his own character rather than by outside circumstances, and as the inner conditions of character change less from time to time than the outside circumstances, so the conduct of the man of developed character is more predictable.

(c) It has been argued that if an action or a motive leading to an action has no cause, then the person doing the action cannot be regarded as responsible for it. If at a particular

moment I can indifferently do either of two actions, the action that I do has no moral significance, for it is not the result of anything in my character; the other action might have taken place just as readily. The action or motive has appeared spontaneously and nothing that the agent could have done would have prevented its appearance. This view actually suggests that it is not self-determinism but indeterminism which would deny all possibility of moral responsibility. Morality demands that our actions should issue from a continuous character or a permanent self.

The following arguments have been used in favour of indeterminism:

(a) We all know directly after we have done an action that we could have acted differently from what we actually have done. After having taken a book from my shelf I know that I could have taken another book. This intuition of freedom is universal and so deserves serious consideration, but it is possible that it may be mistaken. The feeling of remorse or regret over past actions also seems to imply the knowledge that we could have acted differently, but here again we may be deceived as to our capacities. People often imagine that in other circumstances they could have done things which they have failed to do, but the student of human nature generally disbelieves them. For example, a man says confidently that he would have made a greater success of another profession than he has made of his own, but those who know him best realize that he would have had the same lack of success elsewhere. Similarly our belief in our freedom of choice may be a false belief.

(b) The argument that without free will morality and moral theory would be impossible has already been referred to. What is true is that praise and blame, at least in the ordinary sense of these words, would not be justified. Our praise would become an expression of admiration much in the way that we may express our admiration of the beauties of nature. Some people have argued that without freedom of choice punishment can never be justified, but this does not seem to be correct. When we allow pain in operative surgery to cure diseases which most people believe to be determined by natural causes, it does not seem unreasonable to allow pain

to be used in the curing of criminal tendencies, even if they involve no free choice.

(c) It has been argued that the knowledge that our conduct is determined by causes over which we have no control provides no inducement for moral effort and so morality is likely to suffer. Historically this does not seem to have been the case. The early Mohammadans, and the Calvinists among Christians, whose determinism almost approached fatalism, were men of strong moral purpose in practical life. To regard good conduct as inevitably necessitated by God's decrees may actually strengthen the purpose to carry out that conduct, and the inspiring effect of the idea that this conduct is God's appointed conduct may be stronger than the paralysing effect of the idea that man of himself can do nothing.

(d) It may be argued that determinism gives no hope for the future as it admits of no real change in the universe, of nothing really new. It is possible, however, that the law of determinism is a law of inevitable progress, and it was in this way that the determinists of the nineteenth century regarded it.

(e) However much we may be able to predict the actions of a developed character we can never be quite sure about them. This is not due merely to our lack of complete knowledge of the characters and circumstances of others, for we would deeply resent other people maintaining that with such complete knowledge they would be able to tell exactly what we ourselves would do. This, in fact, takes us back to our first and strongest argument that we have an intuition of our own freedom.

These arguments are not decisive in favour of either self-determinism or indeterminism. If our actions are determined by antecedent causes it is a causation of a very different kind from anything that we know in the physical world. Some of the factors that make it different are (i) the presence of the activity of choice, a kind of event that is unknown in the physical world, (ii) the presence of the activity of setting oneself to do an action, again a kind of event unknown in the physical world, and (iii) the fact that the thought of what is right or our duty may be one cause determining our actions. Those who believe in the freedom of the will do not deny that

our actions are limited, and to that extent determined, by conditions both internal and external. No one supposes that a man with no knowledge of Russian in his own mind is free to talk with an inhabitant of Russia in the latter's own language, and gravitation sees to it that we do not jump unaided to the moon, even if we were foolish enough to wish to do so. Professor Broad suggests that the ultimate properties of a substance or those in respect of which the substance cannot change confine the states of that substance within narrow limits, but within these limits there is a certain amount of free play.[1] The believer in free will appears to hold that the ultimate substance of mind is of a kind that allows a rather larger free play to its states or processes than do most physical substances. The question of freedom is not whether mind acts on the body or not; both determinists and indeterminists would admit commonly that there is causation of the determinist kind between mind and body if they accept the common view of interactionism. Accordingly, the question is whether mental processes, and particularly the process of setting oneself to action, are determined or not. The point of view of the outside observer in psychology (as in other sciences) confines him to the observation of outside causes producing effects on the character of the subject whom he is observing. From the nature of the case he never can observe a self which acts causally and yet is not determined in its actions by causes which may now be a part of the character of the subject but originally were produced by outside causes either in the heredity or the environment of the subject. Professor C. A. Campbell has suggested that there is also an inner standpoint, and in it we do definitely give a meaning to a causation by the self as distinguished from the character of the self, determined as it is by heredity and environment and of course by past 'self-causations'.[2] In a moment of temptation, we know that we need not take the line of least resistance, that is the line our character would lead us to take; by an act of willing the self can decide how far our character shall determine the action. There does appear to be something more in the determination of our actions than the various tendencies of

[1] Proc. Arist. Soc.: *Indeterminism, Formalism and Value*, p. 144ff.

[2] C. A. Campbell: *In Defence of Free Will.*

our character and the outside causes affecting us at the time of the action, even if we hold with the self-determinists that the various tendencies are united in a single mind or self, which is regarded by them as the real determinant of our actions. This something more may be the free play which Professor Broad suggests to be a characteristic of mental substance or it may be the self which Professor Campbell regards as something in some way separable from the character. Self-determinism goes very far to explain what is commonly known as the freedom of the will, but it does not go far enough, for it does not explain the conscious resistance to the determined tendencies of our character. The rival hypotheses can, however, hardly be regarded as more than confessions of ignorance, and the moralist still awaits a theory of willing which will provide a satisfactory psychological basis for a theory of ethics.

Chapter III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALITY

§1. *Levels of Development*

We may distinguish between three stages in the development of morality: (a) the level of instinct, in which the conduct that appears right to the agent is the conduct determined by his fundamental needs and instincts—the innate tendencies described by McDougall; (b) the level of custom, in which the conduct that appears right to the agent is conduct in accordance with the customs of the group to which he belongs; and (c) the level of conscience, in which the conduct that appears right to the agent is that approved by his own individual judgement of what is right and wrong. We have no sufficient grounds to maintain that the development from one stage or level to another is a historical development. The most primitive societies with which we are acquainted at the present day show approval of a great deal of conduct that is in accordance with the custom of the particular society concerned, and there are some matters even in such societies where the individual judgement seems to provide the standard of rightness and wrongness. And even in the most advanced society there will be manifestations of the level of instinct. When a man 'sees red', for the moment the thing that seems to him the only appropriate thing to do is an act of violence which is approved neither by the standards of his group nor by his own reflective judgement when he is in a calmer state of mind. The most conscientious individual in a modern society is likely in most matters to follow the customs of his group without reflection, and only in one or two special matters to adopt deliberately a new standard of his own, different from that of those around him. We are rather in this chapter describing a logical order in the development of the moral judgement, and, in so doing, we are in danger of

ignoring the many complications to be found in men's actual judgements at the different levels of development.

§2. *The Level of Instinct*

Two apparently contradictory pictures have been given of man in his most primitive condition. The French philosopher Rousseau held that man was naturally both free and good, and that the primitive life of man, free from the artificial restrictions placed on him by the customs and institutions of society, was a life of idyllic peace, harmony, goodwill and happiness. On the other hand, the English philosopher Hobbes held that natural man seeks only 'that which pleaseth him and is delightful to himself'. Every man feels by nature that he has a right to all things, and, as all are naturally acquisitive and ferocious, they are bound to be in a state of war with one another. The state of nature is intolerable—'no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain . . . no arts, no letters, no society, and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.[1]

In these pictures of primitive human nature, Rousseau is leaving out certain of the instinctive tendencies which modern psychologists have found in human nature, such as the instincts of pugnacity, self-assertion and acquisitiveness, while Hobbes is leaving out others of these tendencies, such as the gregarious instinct, the parental instinct, which soon becomes attached to other objects than the actual offspring of its owner, and the general innate tendencies to feel sympathy with others, to imitate them and to accept suggestions from them. It is in the life of the lower animals that we find a life nearest to the purely instinctive level, and we may admit that, in comparison with the life of a cultured human society, the life of even the most developed animal group is nasty, brutish and poor. Yet the life of the lower animals is not altogether an unceasing conflict among competing instincts within an individual, or a struggle for existence among different individuals of the same animal species. The gregarious instinct, and the various general tendencies connected with it, are found in many animal species, and there appears to be a

[1] Hobbes: *Leviathan*, Pt. I, Ch. 13.

kind of unconscious tendency to harmony among the various instincts within a single animal organism. Indeed, it is only when man's innate tendencies become conscious in the form of desires that we find those painful conflicts which appear to be at the basis of our judgements of right and wrong. Rousseau seems to have thought that there was an unconscious harmonizing of the instincts to be found in primitive man, who may have had a mystical sense of unity with nature that has been lost both by savages and civilized men in modern times; this is what Levy Bruhl calls the law of participation. There is little evidence of such a harmonizing power in primitive society, although we are probably right in thinking that the savages known to us are the result of degradation and differ in many ways from really primitive peoples. The control of the instincts in the tribes we regard as primitive is often maintained by an elaborate customary morality, reinforced by threatened punishments from a supernatural sphere, or *tabus*, as they are often called.

It is commonly thought that the conduct of animals at the level of instinct cannot be regarded as right or wrong. It is said to be neither moral nor immoral but amoral or nonmoral, conduct to which moral predicates are not really applicable at all. There is no motivation by the judgement of what is right or by the sense of duty as we find them in human beings. Yet it is reasonable to suppose that in some dim way the animal regards the carrying out of the instinctive impulse as the right thing to do. It is in this way at any rate that instinctive impulses appear to human beings. 'The impulse of an instinct reveals itself as an axiomatically obvious proposition, as something which is so clearly "sense" that any idea of discussing its basis is wicked or foolish.'[1] It is in this way that it seems obvious to the angry man that he should take vengeance on his opponent. From another point of view, at the level of instinct, the influence of outside circumstances seems to predominate over the inner nature of the animal, and there is nothing that we can call free choice; with sufficient knowledge of the animal's inner nature, and of the outside causes affecting it, complete prediction of its

[1] Trotter: *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, p. 15 (*c.f.* James: *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 386).

conduct would be possible. We may at a later stage look back on such conduct and label it good or bad; we may commend as good the hen's self-sacrifice in defending her chickens from a hawk, and we may condemn as bad the tiger's massacre of weaker animals, but these are figures of speech, borrowed from a later morality. The conduct of both fowl and tiger is simply natural; to slaughter other animals may appear to the tiger as much the right thing to do (if there be any such consciousness in animals at all), as to sacrifice herself for her chickens appears to the mother hen.

Even at the level of instinct there must be kinds of conduct which are liked by members of the same species as the agent, for example those actions which are satisfying to the self-assertive instinct of the members of the species, and there must be other kinds of conduct which are disliked by the members of the species, and which arouse in them the instincts of repulsion and pugnacity. Westermarck found the origin of moral disapproval in the violation of our self-feeling which is a common incentive to resentment.[1] It is certainly reasonable to hold that primitive man regards as bad what he dislikes. The fact that our moral judgements had their origin in our emotions of resentment would not, however, prove that they are now simply statements that we feel resentment to the conduct we label bad; such a view would be as absurd as holding that modern science deals with magic, because it had its origin in the alchemy of the Middle Ages. The fact that our moral judgements had as their antecedents likes and dislikes which varied from person to person does not prove that they are now lacking in objective validity. Westermarck himself made impartiality or disinterestedness an essential characteristic of moral emotion,[2] and this characteristic seems to play a larger part in moral judgements as we now find them than the primitive likings or resentments in which these judgements may have originated.

The development of conduct in a primitive society must at some period or other have taken place in two directions. (i) It became more social and co-operative. A single man can do very little either in producing things to satisfy his

[1] Westermarck: *Ethical Relativity*, pp. 62–70.

[2] Westermarck: op. cit., pp. 91–94.

needs or to protect himself against his enemies. And some of his innate tendencies like the gregarious instinct, the sex instinct, imitativeness, suggestibility and sympathy already imply the existence of other people and his having relations with them. It is both because of his own naturally social nature as well as for the better satisfying of his needs that a man forms both temporary and permanent associations with his fellow-men. This leads very soon to some form of division of labour with different people performing the different functions for which they are best suited. In one very simple form of division of labour we may find the man defending the home from its enemies, while the woman provides the food. In different circumstances the man does the work of hunting while the women gathers the vegetable foods, or, at a later stage, the man does the outdoor work, while the woman, more confined in her range by the need of tending her children, does the work inside the home. Later developments in the division of labour demand the different kinds of craftsmen, such as the potter and the weaver in Indian village life, and such specialization of function is a mark of a developing society. (ii) Conduct becomes more rational, as man tends to use his intelligence more and more in satisfying his needs. This is seen in the making of tools which are simply intelligent contrivances to assist in production. It is seen also in the use of stratagem in primitive wars; the weaker man by using his brain may defend himself successfully against the stronger. At this stage, reason is chiefly used in the choice of means, but means are proximate ends, for our mind may be so occupied in seeking the means, that for the time being it becomes for us an end, and there can be no hard and fast distinction between the choice of proximate ends and of ultimate ends. Even for civilized man the distinction is often a vague one, and the ends which we set before us as definite goals, like passing examinations and making money, are really only proximate ends or means, although we are often vague as to the ends to which these means lead.

It has already been suggested that a society entirely at the level of instinct may never have really existed in the human or in the animal world. What we have been describing are tendencies which must have been at work at some time or

other during the early stages of the development of human conduct. There must have been the raw material of instinctive tendencies, including from the very start certain socializing tendencies. There must have been at some stage or other feelings of pleasure in certain types of conduct and of displeasure in others, feelings which may have spread rapidly in a group, because of its members' natural tendencies to suggestibility and sympathy. And at times developments must have occurred, not equally in all directions but spasmodically and unevenly, towards more rational and more social conduct. It appears too that, in spite of much emphasis on the continuity of evolution made by scientists at different times, at one point nature made a leap. While there are resemblances between animal conduct and savage conduct, the difference between the two is immense, and there is no evidence of intermediate links. The most highly cultured chimpanzee falls far short of the most primitive of normal savages in the ability to use his reason and to engage in social activity, and in the power to communicate with his fellows that these imply. It is likely that he also falls short in his power to direct his conduct consciously. And at his very lowest level man shows a capacity of judging his own behaviour that does not seem to occur at all in the animal world.

§3. *The Level of Custom*

At this stage man considers to be right those forms of conduct which are approved by the standards or customary modes of behaviour of the social group to which he belongs. At this level the bad action is the action that is 'not done', and the good action is the action that has been 'always done'. The importance of this level is suggested by the effect that it has had on our ethical terminology. The word 'morals' is derived from the Latin word *mores*, meaning habits or customs, and the name 'ethics' itself comes as a secondary derivative of the Greek word ἔθος which also meant custom or habit. We now distinguish between customs that are actually practised by the majority of a society and customs that are approved by the majority, (whether they live up to their convictions or not), for we realize that the majority may see the better and follow the worse. At the level of custom,

however, this distinction is not consciously made; what is done is what ought to be done, and the ways in which their ancestors actually lived are the ways approved by the living generation.

There can be little doubt that the basis of customary morality is the instinct known as the herd or gregarious instinct, and the innate tendencies of sympathy, imitativeness and suggestibility which are closely bound up with this instinct. Perhaps they should be regarded rather as expressions or developments of this instinct than as general innate tendencies in the way they are described by McDougall. As Trotter has pointed out in his book on *The Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, impulses that are derived from the herd, because of this herd instinct, come to consciousness with the sense of being the obvious thing to do, which we have seen already to be characteristic of human impulses dependent on instinct.[1] There is however a noteworthy difference between impulses arising from the herd instinct and those arising from other instincts. Each other instinct has its own special impulse; the sex instinct impels men to mate and the flight instinct impels men to run away. The herd instinct, however, may give to any tendency to action, to which we are impelled by the group, the feeling that it is the obvious and necessary thing to do, and to any opinion the characteristic of appearing self-evident to the person holding it. In this way the moral opinions of the group come to the individual as self-evident principles which no reasonable person can doubt. It is because of their common instinctive basis that it is impossible to distinguish sharply the level of custom from the level of instinct. It is just as much a part of human nature to feel pleasure in what gives our neighbour pleasure as it is to feel resentment against a person interfering with our actions or to feel tender affection towards our offspring.

We are here dealing with a level of conduct of which we can find adequate examples both in history and in primitive communities as they exist to-day. Such communities differ from more civilized societies in a larger place being given to the observing of customs and a smaller place being given to individual reflection on moral matters. It must be admitted,

[1] Trotter: op. cit., pp. 44–48.

however, that even the most advanced of human societies is still largely at the level of custom, for few people in them reflect much on moral matters and these generally only in one or two special directions. A striking characteristic of the customary level is the large place given in it to the tribe or community as contrasted with the individual. At this stage the tribe or nation is not merely a political unit for the protection of its members. It is an economic unit generally providing for all its own needs, holding all its property in common, and having a certain amount of specialization or division of labour within the group. It is also in some sense a moral unit for a wrong done by a member of the tribe is a wrong for which the whole tribe is held responsible, and a wrong done to a member of the tribe is a wrong which all its members must avenge. The moral outlook at this level is illustrated in the story of Achan in the Old Testament.[1] When Achan committed a theft the whole tribe suffered a defeat, and even when the wrong that had so caused the defeat was traced to Achan, not the thief alone but his household and kinsmen were destroyed in order to remove the evil from the tribe. The blood feud between families as it still exists on the North-West Frontier of India is another example of the family or tribe being held responsible for the crime committed by the individual. The group is also a religious unit, often united by mystical and supernatural bonds to some dead ancestor, or even to a totem-animal, which is in some sense regarded as the ancestor of the tribe in whose life the whole tribe shares.

The place given to the single group or tribe in a primitive society at the customary level may be contrasted with the many groups with which an individual has relations in a modern society. The modern man has attachments to various groups—to his family (which is a far smaller group than the joint-family or tribe of the customary level), to his business, to his club, to his school or college, to his church and to his state. One of the results of having so many attachments is that no single one of them can have the authority or scope in the life of the individual that the primitive tribe had for the primitive man. The fact, too, that the different groups

[1] Joshua vii.

to which he belongs make different and sometimes conflicting demands on the individual makes the modern man realize that he himself has to decide what action he shall take when such a conflict arises. It is difficult for us to put ourselves in the position of a man at the level of custom, when there was one group only, a kind of enlarged family before which the individual seemed utterly powerless and without the support of which the individual would have no sort of life to enjoy at all.

How did customs or approved ways of acting arise? They were ways of acting that were satisfying to the whole group, partly because they satisfied the instinctive cravings of a great many individuals at the same time, and partly because they made a harmonious compromise among those instinctive tendencies which were in danger of conflicting with one another either within an individual or between different individuals in the community. Primitive man, of course, did not always reason clearly about such customs. Sometimes there was a fallacious piece of reasoning that a certain line of action had been harmful in one particular case and so must be harmful in every case. Such fallacies in inductive reasoning are still at the base of most of our superstitions; for example, people will refuse to travel in green clothes because of the fate at Flodden of the Scottish armies who are alleged to have been so dressed when they marched to defeat.[1] Modern men often detect such superstitions and sharply distinguish them from customs the value of which has been established by experience, but it is unlikely that primitive peoples ever made such a distinction. For them, unlucky conduct was the same as bad conduct, and lucky conduct was the same as good conduct. Another fact which weakens the value of custom is that a custom always tends to outlive its usefulness. The custom of fighting duels came from a time when the duel was the only practicable way in which a wronged individual could secure justice, but it survived into times when there were other less arbitrary and more impartial institutions for securing justice, and then just because it was an old institution it had a special appeal to men of

[1] There are many other traditions about the origin of this superstition, but the same fallacy is involved in them.

honour. Old age not only keeps alive customs which are no longer useful; it often gives them an air of venerability.

The group has various ways of maintaining the observance of its customs. (a) There is first of all the force of public opinion. Our natural tendencies of sympathy, imitativeness and suggestibility make us wish to do what our neighbours approve, and nothing is more unpleasant to the ordinary man than the feeling that he is regarded as a strange being with whom his neighbours will have nothing to do. If Trotter was right, the herd instinct gives to the opinions of our neighbours an obviousness and self-evidence that belong to opinions motivated by instinct and not by logical reasoning. (b) A familiar support of the customs of a primitive society is the *tabu*. If an individual does something that is forbidden by custom, supernatural powers will inflict a punishment of illness, accident, or even death upon him. This punishment is often attributed to the activity of the dead ancestors or even the animal ancestor of the tribe so that it invests the authority of the group with that feeling of religious awe which Otto has called the 'numinous' state of mind.[1] (c) This authority is often supported by an elaborate religious ritual, and ritual is a most powerful ally of customary morality. Religious ritual often serves to work up the tribe to a state of great emotion, and this emotion is often enlisted on the side of what is customary. This is especially true of the rites of initiation to manhood where impressive ritual is used to bring home to the youth both the authority of the tribe and the importance of observing its customs. A modern example is that of the solemn oath administered often with the ritual embellishment of a foreign language to doctors on their being admitted to their profession. Ritual is also used in the condemnation and punishment of offenders against the customs of the group, and we find this still in the dignified ritual of our law-courts which manifests the majesty of the law. There are other uses of ritual where its connexion with the maintenance of custom is more indirect but still effective. We find ritual used on the great occasions of life, birth, marriage and death, and at other times of special importance such as the sowing and harvesting of crops, the declaration of war or the

[1] Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*, Ch. 2.

building of a new house. In these things the ritual often indicates that the group as a whole has an interest and stake in the life of the individual, and its part on such occasions adds to its authority in the eyes of the individual. (d) The group is generally prepared to use physical force to compel the recalcitrant individual to observe its customs. It is characteristic of customary morality that it has no hesitation in compelling people to be good; this hesitation and the view that people should be free to choose the right for themselves belong to the level of conscience.

At the level of custom the great step has been taken of having established moral standards, so that the individual no longer always does simply what is right in his own eyes or what appeals to his natural instincts. There are defects in these standards, as we shall see in the next paragraph, but to have standards with a certain amount of universality is 'the one thing needful' for morality. At this level too the standards are supported both by the public opinion of the group and by strong penalties for their violation. Nor, as is sometimes suggested, are these standards altogether arbitrary; they have been proved to a large extent to be useful by the collective experience of the group. And these standards have themselves a secondary usefulness in furthering those bonds that bind the group together in a unified social life. The observing of customs tends to bring out in the individual those tendencies which lead to sociability and benevolence rather than those which are self-assertive and individualistic, and the former are certainly the tendencies which contribute most to moral progress. The individual is also likely to form regular habits—in itself a real moral gain—under the influence of the established standards of the group in which he lives.

It is true that at this level the standards themselves have very great defects. There is generally little distinction made between customs based on reasoning and experience and those based on mere superstitions. Again rules dealing with most trivial matters are often given more importance than rules dealing with what we now regard as the most important affairs of morality. A slight error, like the using of a wrong word in a piece of religious ritual, may be regarded as more

serious than a crime of violence. We find in all early codes of law, even in the Jewish law attributed to Moses, a curious mixture of petty regulation and ultimate moral principle. On the whole, the standards of customary morality are too rigid, making no allowance for individual circumstances, and they take little or no account of the motives of the doer of an action. They leave little room for individual freedom with its possibilities of new and creative forms of goodness, and the fact that the standards are to be rigidly enforced means that they cannot be set very high. This lack of freedom and the rigid subordination to a limited number of fixed rules are not the best conditions for the development of the highest type of character, and there seems to be little at this stage to encourage the unification of the various desires of the individual, which is characteristic of developed morality.

§4. *The Level of Conscience*

At the level of custom the authority in the moral life is outside the individual; he must do what is approved by his group. At the level of conscience the moral authority is inside the individual; it is an inner voice that directs him, and now it is what conscience commands that appears the obvious and proper thing to do. This is so much the case that Trotter was inclined to maintain that conscience is merely a developed form of the moral dictates of the herd operating through the herd instinct,[1] but surely the most characteristic expressions of conscience are those where it contradicts the commands of the group. It is true that conscience often bids a man follow the customs of his group, but sometimes it does not, and at this level the deciding factor is always what the man himself regards as right.

The advance from the level of custom takes place in three directions. (a) The standards of morality are now actively chosen by the individual after a greater or less amount of deliberation; they are no longer accepted passively as an inevitable part of his life in a group. Even when the individual does not himself make an active examination of the standards of his group, and does not deliberately choose to

[1] Trotter; op. cit., p. 40, 41.

accept or reject them (and few individuals have the ability and the energy to engage in such a deliberate examination), the individual still feels that he can when he chooses decide for himself in moral matters. (b) There is a new personal interest in morality. At the group level the moral standards are more or less unconsciously accepted as part of the moral atmosphere of the society to which the individual belongs, but at the level of conscience to be good is an individual matter, and is sometimes actually thought of as being for the advantage merely of the individual himself. We may indeed define individualism as 'the assertion by the individual of his own opinions and beliefs, his own independence and interests as over against group standards, authority and interest'. Historically, the tendency for morality to become a more personal matter has been helped by the coming of the higher religions and especially of Christianity with its emphasis on the value of the individual soul, which, in contrast to the transitory nature of all social groups, is destined for a personal immortality. (c) While other aspects of human welfare become matters for the various institutions and groups in a developed society, pure morality tends to become the sphere of the individual alone. There is a tendency, for example, to separate the spheres of ethics and of politics, holding that politics deals with the affairs of the state, and that the moral standards which apply to individuals are hardly relevant in the political sphere; this is surely an unfortunate effect of the tendency to individualism. We can see the change of outlook in the difference between Greek ethics with its view that the good man is primarily the good citizen and that ethics is a subordinate if fundamental part of politics, and modern ethics, which holds that political or civic life is at the most one sphere among the many in which a man can express his goodness.

The development from the level of custom to the level of conscience may appear to be largely due to historical accidents. We have seen how the spread of Christianity aided that individualistic outlook which is fundamental to the level of conscience. Other historical events, like the breaking up of the Greek city states in the fourth century before Christ, and the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

with its rich unfolding of individual human capacities were powerful aids to such an advance. The movement from customary morality to individual reflective morality is one, however, which depends on fundamental tendencies of human nature which only receive a new impetus from such historical events as have been mentioned. In all men there are two opposing tendencies which we may label the 'hormic' and 'mnemic' tendencies, the tendency to be always seeking something new and the tendency to cling firmly to the old. W. S. Gilbert indicated these two tendencies when he wrote:

> 'That every boy and every gal
> That's born into the world alive
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative.'[1]

He might have said equally truly that each new child is both Liberal and Conservative at the same time; each has the tendency both to go forward to the unknown and to remain in the ways of the past. The mnemic tendency by itself favours the continuance of the level of custom, and the hormic tendency may lead to new ways of conduct that refuse to be subordinated to moral standards at all; this is the reason why moralists so often distrust those with new ideas. It is the struggle between the two tendencies within the individual which arouses in him individual reflection and so raises him from the level of custom to the level of conscience. It may only be in one or two matters that the two tendencies conflict in any individual, but when he does face that conflict reflectively even on a single issue, he has passed from the level of custom to the level of conscience. Another factor in human nature which leads to this advance is the conflict between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group as a whole. It is characteristic of the customary level of morality that the individual has no other interests than those of his group, and so long as the conditions of life are difficult and dangerous a conflict between personal interest and the interest of the tribe is not likely to arise; the individual sees that the very best

[1] W. S. Gilbert: *Iolanthe*, Act. II.

thing which he can do for himself is to subordinate his own interests to those of his group and to assist in the common defence of his group and in the common struggle for existence. There is a return to such a condition in modern times in the emergency of war when individuals again are prepared to ignore their personal interests for the sake of the common interests of their society. Nor is such a conflict likely to arise when the members of a group are almost at the same level of ability and education, for then they will find their own interests served best by working entirely for the interests of the group. The case is different, however, as soon as a man outshines his fellows. The village potter in an Indian village may continue merely to play his part in the group economy of the village until he discovers some process which enables him to excel all other potters. Then people come from other villages to buy his pots, and he will be tempted to go and sell for his own personal gain in a more advantageous market. For our purpose the relevant result is that he begins to think of his own interest as something different from the interests of his group. Circumstances may hasten the conflict between group and individual interests. A time of famine, for example, may drive the energetic individuals away from the area of their tribe to seek their living elsewhere, and when this happens, the interests of the exiled individual are no longer likely to be identical with those of the group. War, industrial development and indeed outside change of any kind are likely to offer opportunities for new leaders, and the new leader is likely to find his own interests to be different from those of the tribe with its established chief. Yet it would be wrong to suggest that the assertion of individual interests is a late development, for, from the very beginning, there is in each individual an instinct of self-assertion. At the level of custom the expressions of this instinct may be kept in strict control by the customs of the tribe, but it is there all the time and is ready to find expression whenever opportunity offers. One of the first ways in which any individual is likely to assert himself is by using his own judgement in moral matters and, whenever he does so, he has for the moment at least moved from the level of custom to the level of conscience.

§5. *A Comparison of the Level of Custom and the Level of Conscience*

Morality to-day in most parts of the world is largely a matter of custom with, here and there, individuals reflecting on moral matters, and, under the guidance of conscience, refusing to accept the customs of their country or class or 'set'. It is a social gain that most men should accept the standards of their group without question; if everybody were constantly asking questions about the rightness and wrongness of the ways of their society, there would be a lack of stability in the morals of a community, and the young would have very little chance of learning almost unconsciously the moral traditions of their race. In most matters even those who reflect on morality accept these traditions without question; it is only when the reflective person finds some inconsistency in the standards of his group or finds that they are not in accord with the highest moral aspirations of his own nature that he asks questions and ultimately adopts new moral standards. Many of the moral standards that prevail at the level of custom must have originated in the reflection of some individual in the past. It is true that the founders of the great religious moral codes attributed their codes to a Divine inspiration, but, even if we admit this, the Divine inspiration came through the individual conscience and must have been coloured by the moral reflections of the human instrument before it was expressed in a moral code. The codes so provided by the pioneers of morality probably suffered weakening and modification before they gained general acceptance; we need only compare the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and the conventional moral code of the majority of Christians to see how individual ideals become weakened before they become part of the accepted code of customary morality. In this way the level of conscience may have been often found at the beginning of customary morality, as well as occurring as a revolt against customary morality, the way in which we most commonly find it at the present day.

Reflective morality as it is found at the level of conscience and conventional morality as it is found at the level of custom differ in the following respects:

(1) At the level of custom 'what is done' and 'what is not

done' may not be what we would call moral matters at all. Religious ritual, for example, is given an equal importance to moral conduct, and, to judge from the way that the two are mixed together in such a code as the law of Moses, both are regarded in the same way. To be wrong in the one is the same kind of wrongness as to be wrong in the other. Again, no difference seems to have been made between what we would now regard as a moral law and what we would regard as a political by-law, like the rule of the road; both must equally be done by the members of the tribe. In modern times the confusion between morality and other spheres is most clearly seen in the case of etiquette. The conventional person, and the word conventional implies that in some respects he is at the level of custom, feels a breach in the code of the manners of his class, like wearing a lounge suit at dinner while all the other guests are in dinner jackets, with the same kind of remorse as he would feel if his fellow-guests caught him telling a lie. Reflective morality on the other hand makes the distinction very clear between what is morally wrong, and what is merely disapproved of on other grounds, although it may admit that these other breaches of custom may have indirect moral effects. A heretical way of performing a religious rite may, for example, cause social disorder, as when Laud's liturgy was used in Edinburgh in 1637; disobedience of the rule of the road may cause an accident endangering life; and even a man's appearing at dinner in a lounge suit may hurt the feelings of his hostess; all these are moral effects. At the level of conscience, however, we see just what is moral about them, and distinguish it from what is merely customary, and this is our first great gain.

(2) At the level of custom the business of the individual is to observe and to follow the habits of others. At this level it may even be a disadvantage to morality for him to observe too closely and attentively, for the individual is more likely to enter into the moral outlook of his group if the natural tendencies of sympathy, imitativeness and suggestibility are allowed a free and half-conscious play without the interference of deliberate attention which may lead to critical reflection. On the other hand the task of the individual at the level of conscience is to reflect on the customs of his

group; these are the data on which his conscience works, for even the most original moralist does not begin a new moral system from the start; he begins by criticism of what is there already. In his reflection, he is likely to make discoveries of different kinds. (a) He will discover that certain customs which were formerly useful are now no longer so, but may even be detrimental to the welfare of his society. The custom may no longer fulfil the purpose that it originally fulfilled. For example, the prohibition of the taking of interest in Mohammadan countries was certainly a useful rule when all the money that was borrowed was borrowed for consumption by the borrower, but the extension of that custom into industrial communities, where money is chiefly borrowed for purposes of production and so performs a useful function in society, seems to be socially harmful and quite outside the original purpose of the rule. (b) He will discover that customs vary greatly from one another in their importance. The paying of tithes on spices like mint and anise and cummin according to Jewish custom was recognized by Christ as something that ought to be done, but he saw that it was a duty of little importance compared with others, such as works of judgement, mercy and faith.[1] (c) He will discover that certain customs are not justified by his own moral intelligence. The institution of slavery had in the early nineteenth century a long tradition of custom behind it, and its supporters could point out that there was not a single word against the institution as such in the Christian Bible which was considered to express man's highest moral aspirations, and yet to reflective men at that period the institution was recognized as a bad one and one that had to be got rid of. At the present day the pacifist opposes the custom of fighting for the defence of one's country, which has certainly a long tradition of moral approval behind it; the pacifist of course may be wrong, for the fallible individual may be led to wrong conclusions by his reflections, but whether right or wrong he has taken the matter of fighting from the level of custom to the level of conscience, as the name 'conscientious objector' given to the pacifist in time of war suggests. All such reflection is stimulated and aided by the comparison of the moral code of one's own group with those

[1] Luke xi. 42.

of other groups. Indeed, travel and wars, which have taken men to see the ways of other civilizations, are powerful influences in arousing men's minds from the level of custom to that of conscience.

(3) At the level of custom there is no room for progress or development. The reformer and the delinquent are both apt to be put in the same class; at the present day, for example, both are likely to be labelled 'Bolsheviks' or 'revolutionaries' by the supporters of conventional morality. The rising to the level of conscience opens the door for change; this change need not always be for the better, but at least progress is now possible. In our next section we shall see certain directions in which progress has been made in the period known to history.

(4) At the level of custom the group is satisfied if the individual outwardly observes its customs. It is to be remembered, indeed, that there are customs of speaking as well as of doing, and it is necessary to 'say the right thing' as well as to 'do the right thing'. It is at the customary level that heretics, who say the thing that must not be said, receive the severest treatment. The customary level might go so far as to demand a uniformity of motive, but there is no way of testing such a uniformity and so custom can demand only uniformity in outward expression. The level of conscience on the other hand is one where it is maintained that the inner springs of action, the motive and the intention, are of more importance than the outward bodily movements or their effects. In this direction morality has received much aid from the development of more personal and spiritual religion with its belief that 'man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart'.

(5) The level of custom tends to maintain morality at rather a dead level throughout the community. Painful punishments prevent any individual from sinking much below that level, but there is little encouragement and at times even some danger for the individual who aspires to rise much above the average level of his fellows. For the politician who has little concern with anything but the smooth running of the state there is much advantage in the maintenance of the level of custom. It avoids disturbance, it prevents serious degradation, and it does not require on the part of the statesman

the effort of creative thought. The level of conscience on the other hand is one in which great individual saints are likely to appear, but it is also unfortunately one in which the individual who chooses the downward path has little to keep him from utter ruin. This is one reason why many who themselves have risen to the level of conscience urge the necessity of maintaining a customary morality in most matters; they say that their conscience approves the customary standards of their group. They realize that a customary morality is more likely to keep the evil-doer from wrong than the leadings of his own undeveloped or perverted conscience.

(6) In a similar way customary morality cannot adapt itself to the special needs of each individual. In some respects this is a gain for it ensures that the established rules of morality cannot be upset by the self-interest or prejudice of a particular individual. Yet it does prevent what we may call the finer adaptations of the moral life, such as the doing of the right thing in particular circumstances which are unique. It has been a characteristic of the morally best men that they have had the insight to do such unique acts. It is said that at the end of the first World War in 1918, the suggestion was made to the British Prime Minister that his first move should be the sending of some shiploads of food to Hamburg in vanquished Germany. We may well believe that the maker of this suggestion had a unique insight and that the action would have been morally right, but the Prime Minister probably realized that such a thing was 'not done' and was contrary to the standards of the group in such circumstances. Such an action belongs to the level of conscience which can always be on the outlook for new ways of being good.

Such a comparison may seem altogether in favour of reflective morality at the conscience level, but it is doubtful whether such morality can exist except with a background of customary morality. If the individual is to have a free choice in moral matters, he must have some stability of moral background, and some assurance that his fellow-citizens will not interfere unduly with his freedom. It is likely that it is only a well-established moral tradition that can provide such a background. Anarchy does not provide the best environment for the exercise of the individual conscience.

The level of conscience itself is not without its defects and dangers. The possibility of an individual choosing the way of evil with none of the restraints imposed by customary morality has already been mentioned. Yet even for the man who takes the good life seriously there are certain dangers. The conscientious man may, for example, fall into a kind of morbidity or unhealthy self-centredness in which his attention is taken away from the obvious duties demanded of him by his community to the questionings of his own conscience. In extreme cases there may even be a deliberate cult of his own perfection with a corresponding neglect of his social duties. The monk who has chosen to leave the world for the cultivation of his own soul is in danger of forgetting that he has duties to the world he has abandoned. It may be that some men give their best service to the world in living the monastic life, but in such there must be no morbid self-centredness. Again, the fact that at this level there are so many different spheres of human activity makes it easy for the individual to limit his morality to certain of these spheres, for example to his leisure and family life, while his business is run for the purpose of making money with no moral considerations except the very limited honesty that business prudence requires. In an extreme case a man may find other spheres of activity so interesting that he ignores morality altogether. The artist may claim that he is so absorbed in his art that for him morality simply does not matter at all. Another danger of the level of conscience is that of an individual giving up the observance of a moral rule when he no longer understands its meaning and usefulness. Around the institution of marriage there have gathered in the course of history a great number of customs. Many of these have seemed to the reflective of our own generation to have no significance, and the result has been a tendency to abandon all the restraints imposed by tradition, although a fuller reflection would show that the doing so has always had disastrous effects on society. It appears as if the right attitude to traditional custom is to abandon it not when we fail to see its usefulness but only when we see that it is definitely harmful. There is a safety and stability about customary morality, even although it does not admit of the attainment of such heights of goodness

as a morality directed by individual conscience, and there appears to be a place for both custom and reflection in an ideal community.

§6. *The Historical Development of Morality*

A survey of social history as it is known to us does show that on the whole, in spite of periods of sinking into merely customary ways, there has actually been a development from the level of custom in the direction of the level of conscience. Of course this development has not been continuous; after the appearance of a moral leader who, by his insight or reflection, rejects one of the accepted rules of morality, there is a long period in which, after struggle and much apparent failure, the new rule becomes accepted as a part of customary morality. Indeed, the reflective moralist has not achieved his purpose until what was for him a matter of conscience has become for others a matter of custom. He himself, of course, has reached the level of conscience when he chooses something different from what is customary, but his moral gain is only consolidated by its becoming a matter of custom. The story of the changed attitude to slavery in Britain or America during the nineteenth century provides a good example of this. In an ideal society it appears that conscience would always direct the individual to follow the customs of the group in matters where there is a custom, for an ideal society would have only the best possible customs. In an ideal society there would, however, certainly be matters in which there is no custom, so that there would be an opportunity for originality and creativeness in the moral life.

Historically there have been certain moral gains as part of this development from customary to reflective morality.

(a) The moral judgement has tended to deal with the inner causes of action rather than the outward conduct. This, as we have seen, is an essential element in the development from the level of custom to the level of conscience. We find it historically in the new attitude to the criminal and particularly to the young delinquent, where an attempt is now made to discover the mental history behind the crime. or in the use of confession in the practice of religion,

(b) The area of the moral life has been enlarged. In the tribal life, moral duties were almost all within the tribe, and such obligations as there were to the stranger were religious and magical rather than moral; it was prudent to be careful in dealing with the unknown. The most nationalistically minded to-day would admit that we have some duties to all humanity. Even those who tell us most emphatically not to interfere with the customs of primitive peoples declare that we have one moral duty to such people, namely the duty of leaving them alone. A great many people now feel that they have some duties to the animal world, at least the obligation not to cause animals useless and unnecessary pain, and this seems a moral advance in the last few centuries about which there can be no doubt. The wilful torturing of animals which until a century ago was among the most common of English sports has, except for the barbarous relics of fox-hunting and cock-fighting, almost disappeared. Certain movements indeed like that against vivisection go very far in giving equal consideration to animals and men in the matter of causing pain. The more humane treatment of animals, even if in some cases it has been perverted to preferring domestic animals to one's fellow-men, is undoubtedly a great moral achievement.

(c) The development to reflective morality has given us the knowledge that morality is something that we can try to understand, and the study of ethics belongs to the level of conscience. In India and China, where customary codes of morality have long prevailed, there has been little ethical reflection. Modern ethics began in those Greek thinkers who themselves passed from the level of custom to the level of conscience, particularly Socrates and the Sophists. At the reflective level, we realize that morality is not a law imposed on us by an arbitrary creator or his ministering priests; it is not even a law imposed upon us by our fellow-men. It is a law that we ourselves can understand, and choose for our guidance because we see that it is good sense to do so. The great Greek moralists realized this, but the long moral domination of the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages made men feel again that the moral law was outside them and beyond their understanding. In totalitarian

states in our own day there has been a renewal of this imposition of the moral law from outside, although this has often been disguised by the supposition that the moral law in some way expresses the 'real will' of the people concerned. It is true that it is better in most cases to observe moral customs that we do not understand if there be no reason for transgressing them, but the very effort to understand is itself a moral enterprise of considerable value, and the means of making the moral law something that we accept open-eyed for ourselves by our own free choice.

Chapter IV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MORAL JUDGEMENT

§1. *Conscience—the Subject of the Moral Judgement*

In the second chapter it was indicated that one of the mental processes which may lead to action is a sense of duty, and in the third chapter the level at which the individual himself judges what is right or wrong has been called the level of conscience. In this chapter we are still more or less engaged in merely descriptive science. We are asking how the sense of duty or conscience actually works in the minds of men; we are not directly concerned with the validity of its decisions or whether they are always in accord with the normative laws of ethics. Conscience is defined in a standard dictionary as 'the faculty or principle which pronounces upon the moral quality of one's actions or motives approving the right and condemning the wrong'.[1] Conscience in the popular opinion is certainly one faculty of the mind, but modern psychologists are almost unanimous in their agreement that the mind works as a single unity, and so it is the mind as a whole that is engaged in making moral judgements. The word 'conscience' itself with its suggestion of knowing *together* expressed in the Latin prefix *con* and its similarity to the wider term 'consciousness' in its very derivation suggests that the mind as a whole is responsible for moral judgements and involved in what we call conscience. The English moralist, Butler, distinguished between two aspects of conscience.[2] (a) There is a cognitive or reflective function of conscience.[3] It considers characters, actions, intentions and motives with the special aim of discovering their goodness and badness.

[1] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.*

[2] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 76.

[3] Butler: *Dissertation II: On the Nature of Virtue.*

Butler himself regarded this reflection as largely an intellectual matter; we have in view an ideal nature or constitution of man and we judge particular characters and actions in reference to that ideal. Conscience also judges that pain is appropriate to wrong-doing and happiness to right-doing. All this seems so far true, but it should also be emphasized that conscience is even more intuitive than intellectual; it sees directly the rightness and wrongness of actions rather than discovers them by reasoning processes, and Butler's view that pain is appropriate to wrong-doing and happiness to right-doing is something that we can only know by a direct insight or intuition. Actually the judgements of conscience vary from being the logical conclusions of well-thought-out trains of moral reasoning to being direct intuitions for which we can offer no reasonable explanations. As a matter of fact there is a similar variation in human judgements in other spheres, in religion for example. Some of our judgements are the results of trains of reasoning; others are judgements the truth of which seems self-evident although incapable of proof. (b) Conscience has also an imperative or authoritative aspect.[1] Butler says that conscience does not merely give arguments for one action rather than another; it decides in favour of one action. To take a metaphor from the law-courts it is in the place of the judge and not of the advocate on either side of the case. Butler realized that, because of human weakness, the actual ability to make such a decision may be lacking in an individual conscience, but the right to do so is always there. 'You cannot form a notion of this faculty conscience,' wrote Butler, 'without taking in judgement, direction, superintendency. This is a constitutive part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself: and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.' Of course in actual experience conscience does not require to give an authoritative decision in the case of every action that we do; our habits are such that we can normally engage in actions without calling in conscience to make a decision as to their rightness. (c) Professor

[1] Butler: *Sermons II, III: Upon the Natural Supremacy of Conscience.*

C. D. Broad has pointed out that conscience has also an executive or active function; it actually initiates or checks actions, and in this way, as we have already pointed out, is one of the mental processes causing action.[1] It may be that the judgements of conscience are judgements with a strong ideo-motor tendency so that they automatically tend to realize themselves in action or in the prevention of action. It is here that the 'sense of duty' comes in as a motive to action. It may do its work by way of an ideo-motor tendency or it may be one of our natural human tendencies to do what the sense of duty directs, although it is clear that such a tendency, if it exists, is often overcome by other tendencies of our nature.

There are other characteristics of conscience. The Greek philosopher Socrates noticed that his guardian spirit or 'daemon' gave negative guidance, telling him what not to do rather than what to do.[2] This seems to be generally characteristic of the direct intuitions of conscience, even in the case of those who make no such claim to supernatural guidance. We have to reflect on plans for positive action, but the prohibition of an action comes more or less intuitively; we just see without reason that it is the wrong thing to do. This may simply be one case of the general truth, that we shall study later in the case of moral laws, that the negative is always more easy to express directly than the positive; it is easier to tell men not to steal than to tell them just what to do in the practice of positive honesty. Yet conscience is not confined like Socrates' daemon to the negative for we do sometimes have the positive intuition that a certain action is the only right one to do. We express this in ordinary life by saying: 'Something inside me told me to do this, and I ought to have done it.'

The feeling of remorse has always been connected with conscience. Conscience not only judges some action that we have done to be wrong, but arouses a peculiar feeling of pain that is extremely unpleasant. Indeed moralists emphasize the pains of conscience as one of the reasons for avoiding

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 76.

[2] See Burnet: *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato*, p. 130.

wrong actions. This is of interest in showing that the affective aspect of mind plays its part in conscience. The reason that painful feelings of remorse are more often aroused than pleasant feelings is not merely man's proneness to do evil. It also depends on the fact which we have just noticed that conscience deals more freely with the negative aspect of morality—what ought not to be done, than with the positive aspect—what ought to be done.

It is often claimed that conscience is infallible and that its judgements are final so that there is no appeal from them. From one point of view this appears to be true. If in the case of an individual action the agent at the moment of acting has the intuition that the action is the wrong one to do, it cannot be right for him there and then to do the action, even although it may be an action approved by ethical theory, public opinion, and the teachings of revealed religion. In this sense it can never be right to disobey conscience, and it may be true that 'an erring conscience is a chimera', although this is hardly what Kant meant by these words.[1] Religious people may hold it as a part of their religious faith that God never allows a man's conscience to lead him astray. We shall have to consider later the question of the infallibility of conscience. What our common observation tells us (and it is with ordinary description that we are concerned in this section), is that conscience often does give decisions which are contrary to accepted moral standards, and even contrary to what conscience itself directs at a later stage in its owner's mental development. The extreme case of this is that of the fanatic who is thoroughly conscientious and obedient to the dictates of his conscience, but whose conscience leads him to actions which are almost universally considered to be wrong. There is little doubt but that conscience can be educated, and that it can be trained both in individuals and in groups to become more sensitive to certain evils. It was mentioned in the last chapter for example how there has been an increased sensitivity in Britain to cruelty to animals. Again, an individual, brought up in an environment where the moderate drinking of intoxicants has been customary, may see no evil in the

[1] Kant: *Preface to the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*, XbII, (Abbott, p. 311).

practice, but a growing experience of the dangers of excessive drinking and of the evils caused by it may lead him to a position where his conscience tells him that for him total abstinence is the only right course of action. There is, unfortunately, also a deadening of the conscience or 'hardening of the heart' which is a kind of negative education. The individual who deliberately and repeatedly disobeys his conscience in a certain matter finds the commands of conscience growing less and less clear, and finally they do not bother him at all. Psychology has no doubt that conscience varies in its commands from time to time in the case of most people, and that its judgements may change under influences from outside. An individual may be unfortunate enough to have what Ruskin called the 'conscience of an ass',[1] but experience suggests that if the ass cultivates the society of saints, follows their example reflectively to the best of his ability, and keeps putting into practice what his conscience directs, then his conscience may develop into the conscience of a saint.

Certain common phrases suggest that conscience may be shared by several individuals or that a group may have a common conscience; we say that 'the conscience of the whole nation' was aroused by certain revelations. If conscience is, as we have suggested, influenced by outside circumstances, then it is likely that individuals in the same environment and subject to the same moral influences, will find their individual consciences leading them in the same way, and this explains such phrases as the 'Nonconformist conscience' or 'the conscience of the British people'. Such phrases are, however, in reality figurative, for conscience is characteristically the faculty of an individual. It is when an individual differs from his society and when he feels that he ought to do something different from what his group has always done that conscience becomes prominent. The '*conscientious* objector' is the man who resists the accepted code of his group. To use the term 'conscience' for a generally accepted moral principle rather than for the individual act of making a judgement implies confusion in language and consequently confusion in thought.

[1] Quoted, Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 3, Pt. II, §x.

§2. *Theories of Conscience*

It has been a common opinion of religion to regard conscience as the voice of God speaking in the soul of man, and, if we accept the reality of supernatural influences on the human mind at all, it is reasonable to believe that conscience or the human mind in its capacity of making moral judgements, is particularly susceptible to such influences. The higher religions at any rate are all agreed in regarding God as having a special interest in man's moral judgements and moral actions. Yet it is inconceivable that what we ordinarily call conscience is nothing but this supernatural influence. Its judgements are so often proved to be wrong in the light of fuller knowledge, and its judgements are so often obviously influenced by circumstances and sometimes even by personal prejudices, that to identify conscience with the voice of God would be a particularly arrogant piece of blasphemy.[1] What the moralist may concede to the theologian is that conscience can be put under Divine guidance and become increasingly susceptible to Divine leading, although of course a merely descriptive science can give no proof or disproof of this.

An opposing view is that conscience simply provides a mirror for custom within the individual mind, so that conscience makes for the individual the same moral judgements as custom and law make for the group as a whole. The element of truth in this view is that the judgements of our conscience are almost certainly influenced by the customs and ethos of our society. But the general falsity of the view is evident from the frequency with which the individual conscience rebels against the customs of a man's society. Our whole discussion of the difference between the level of custom and the level of conscience shows that they do not lead to the same actions. A clear interpretation of conscience regarded as mirroring custom was that given by W. K. Clifford.[2] Clifford suggested that the conception of the self is less definite and more wide among primitive peoples, so that when the primitive man thinks, as he does rather vaguely, of his self,

[1] Newton, echoing St. Gregory Nazianzen, said: 'Deus est vox relativa.'

[2] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, p. 115. Quoted from *Lectures and Essays* (*On the Scientific Basis of Morals*).

in a dim way he includes the whole tribe in that conception. 'The savage is not only hurt when anybody treads on his foot, but hurt when anybody treads on his tribe.' 'The tribe qua tribe has to exist, and it can only exist by the aid of such an organic artifice as the conception of the tribal self in the minds of its members.' 'Now suppose,' continued Clifford, 'that a man has done something obviously harmful to the community. Either some immediate desire or his individual self has for once proved stronger than the tribal self. When the tribal self wakes up, the man says: "In the name of the tribe I do not like the thing that I as an individual have done."' This self-judgement in the name of the tribe is called conscience. We may doubt if primitive man, who admittedly thinks vaguely, is capable of making the distinction between the tribal self and the individual self that Clifford's argument would require, but even then the voice of the tribal self could hardly be identified with conscience, for conscience may speak for the individual against the tribe just as often as it speaks for the tribe against the individual.

Many thinkers regard conscience simply as a direct capacity of knowing good from evil, a kind of special sense. This was the view held by the English 'moral sense' school, and it is the basis of those theories of ethics that are included under the title 'intuitionism'. A moral sense may be of two different kinds. It may be a sense which distinguishes directly the bad from the good like the sense of taste which distinguishes sweet from bitter; such a sense is more or less invariable and is little affected by education. Or the moral sense may be a sense like that which distinguishes the beautiful from the ugly; this, too, apparently gives judgements directly and without intellectual reflection, but actually it is a capacity that develops and is modified by education, and its judgements can be analysed and tested by aesthetic standards. Our description of conscience has certainly shown that, if conscience is a sense at all, it is a sense of the second kind, one that can be educated by reflection and modified by outside influences. The judge of our actions is not the moral sense of any individual however undeveloped, but to use Mackenzie's phrase is the 'moral connoisseur',[1] that is the skilled

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 6, §ix.

and sympathetic critic. There may accordingly be an appeal from the judgement of the unskilled conscience to the judgement of this moral connoisseur. How far such an appeal from the individual conscience should be permitted is a question for the ethical theory of intuitionism.

The Scottish philosopher, Adam Smith, who is better known as one of the founders of the science of political economy, held that conscience is based on the psychological fact of sympathy.[1] He considers that the earliest moral judgements are made not on our own conduct, but on the conduct of others and that our approval or disapproval depends on the extent to which we are able to sympathize with others in their conduct. If we see a person getting angry over a trivial matter we cannot sympathize with him, for we feel that his anger is out of all proportion to what we ourselves would feel in similar circumstances. If a person shows gratitude for a benefit received just to the extent that we would feel gratitude in the same circumstances, then we sympathize with him and approve his conduct. Smith has actually introduced here something other than sympathy, namely an intuitive perception of what is fitting conduct in ourselves and so indirectly in other people, and this is something very like the 'moral sense' that has just been described. Smith went on to point out that we know that other people approve or disapprove our conduct just as we do theirs, and so for social reasons 'we become anxious to know how far we deserve their censure or applause, and whether to them we must necessarily appear these agreeable or disagreeable creatures which they represent us. We begin upon this account to examine our own passions and conduct and to consider how these must appear to them by considering how they would appear to us if in their situation'. Smith however admitted that we may feel the judgements of other men to be biased and prejudiced and so we try to imagine how our actions would appear to an 'impartial spectator' from whose point of view we make our moral judgements. An appeal lies from the opinions of mankind 'to a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great

[1] Smith: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, especially Pt. III, Ch. 1.

judge and arbiter of their conduct'.[1] The introduction of the idea of impartiality adds something new to Smith's conception of conscience. The appeal from one's own biased judgements to the judgements of one's fellow-men is followed by the recognition that the judgements of others are biased also, but Smith's argument does not show how conscience from two sets of biased judgements comes to give a set of impartial judgements, unless there be in us some innate capacity for impartiality. We have already seen that it is very likely that moral judgements had their origin in feelings of liking and approval or disliking and disapproval, and Smith certainly was right in emphasizing the place of sympathy in the development of these feelings into moral judgements. The fact that he had to introduce into his theory both the intuitive perception of what is fitting and the notion of impartiality shows that conscience is based on more than sympathy.

The attention paid to the emotional and conative aspects of mind by such psychologists as McDougall and Shand in our own day may tempt the moralist to renew the attempt made in the eighteenth century to analyse conscience in terms of feeling states. It may be suggested that conscience is a specialized moral sentiment or emotional organization similar in pattern to other sentiments like patriotism or being in love. (Shand, however, was careful to make 'respect for conscience' rather than conscience itself a sentiment.)[2] Conscience certainly shares with other sentiments the power of initiating actions. For example, patriotism or a sense of duty may equally lead a man to enlist in the army at a time of war. It is worth noting, with Shand, that as all our sentiments have to do with the regulation of conduct, all may be judged as morally good or morally bad. Conscience however cannot be analysed merely in terms of feelings; that would leave out the reflective aspect of conscience. It is our intellect rather than our feelings, our head rather than our heart, which makes moral judgements.

Many moralists have spoken as if there were in our minds a picture of our true self or our ideal self, by which we judge our conduct as coming short of our ideal, and this is what we mean

[1] Smith: op. cit. Pt. III, Ch. 2.

[2] Shand: *Foundations of Character*, p. 57.

by conscience. In ordinary experience we often picture to ourselves what we should do, either generally or in particular circumstances, and our actual conduct almost always fails to come up to the picture. The phrase 'ideal self', however, suggests that we have in our minds a complete and self-consistent picture of the man we would like to be; the truth is that in actual life we have only very imperfect and very fitful glimpses of something a little better than we are, but something which may, in the light of fuller knowledge and of more virtuous practice, appear later to be very defective. It may be that the aspiration towards something a little higher than we are is a fundamental characteristic of our human nature. Bergson, who held that the course of evolution is not mechanical but creative, and so ever pushing onwards to some new manifestation, was pointing to this same characteristic. And one aspect of this creative urge is the presence in our mind at least on some occasions of a conscious representation of something a little better than we really are, a picture of 'the man to arise in me, That the man that I am may cease to be'. It seems certain that we do sometimes judge our actual character and actions by comparing them with such an ideal self, and our doing so is certainly an activity of conscience.

These various views almost all tend to leave out what Butler called the reflective aspect of conscience, and conscience certainly implies that we do use some intellectual reflection in moral matters. In many cases we think out a right course of action, and only after careful deliberation do we judge our action to be right. The person who commonly uses such deliberate reflection is referred to as 'conscientious' as if he possessed or used conscience to an unusual degree. And this brings us back to the point from which we started. It is the mind as a whole which makes moral judgements. We have mentioned various factors influencing the mind in this task, perhaps supernatural guidance, certainly the customs and ethos of our society, and the sympathy which is a part of our innate mental equipment. The human mind sometimes seems to work by a direct intuition of what is right or fitting and then the description of conscience as a moral sense is appropriate; sometimes it seems to work by a

conscious representation of something better than the actual, and then the term 'ideal self' is relevant; and sometimes it works by the slow deliberate processes of logical reasoning. It appears wrong to confine the name of 'conscience' to any one of these activities; we can use it in fact whenever we are making moral judgements.

§3. *The Nature of the Moral Judgement*

When our conscience tells us that an action is good or right, what is implied in the statement that we make? A great deal of this book is taken up with a logical investigation of the implications of such judgements, what is the true meaning of such terms as good and right. In this chapter, however, our question is still one of psychology; when the ordinary man makes such judgements what is it that he intends to say, rightly or wrongly? And this will serve us in good stead when we come to our more logical investigation, for in ethics we must try to keep our notions as near to those of the ordinary man as we can. We want to use our terms as he uses them, only of course with more accuracy and consistency.

It is necessary, first of all, to distinguish what is subjectively right, that is, what appears to be right to the person using the term, from what is objectively right, that is right in the light of objective moral standards. There is little doubt that the ordinary man does not make this distinction; when he says that moderate drinking is right, what he is really doing is saying that, in his own opinion, moderate drinking is right, that is, subjectively right; but he probably feels that he is making a statement that is objectively true, and that moderate drinking is right, apart from his own opinion altogether. What makes confusion still easier is that many moralists hold that it is always objectively right for a man to do what is subjectively right to himself, for example that it was really right for the Inquisitor to condemn heretics to death, because he himself saw that this and this only was the right thing to do. In the meanwhile we need only note how easy it is to confuse the subjectively right and the objectively right, and to suggest that in common speech we are constantly confusing them.

There are four implications that may be in people's minds

when they use the terms 'right' and 'good' and the other ethical terms which were mentioned in the first chapter. These may be called summarily (*a*) value, (*b*) obligatoriness, (*c*) moral fittingness, and (*d*) objective validity. It is not likely that all these implications are present in a person's mind when he uses an ethical term, but one or more of them certainly is. Certain terms emphasize one implication more than another; 'duty', for example, emphasizes obligatoriness, and 'right' implies moral fittingness rather than value. It may be that these notions are not completely in harmony with one another, so that what has most value need not be what is most obligatory. These are questions for our ethical study; what we have now to do is to consider how these implications are present in the mind of an ordinary person as he makes his moral judgements.

(a) *Value.* When we make the judgement, 'This action is good', we imply that the action has some value or that it is worth while doing. The same is true, although perhaps in a less degree, of the judgement, 'This action is right'. It may be that the action is worth while in itself apart from its results; this is what we mean often when we say that a character is good, and what we mean sometimes when we say a motive like gratitude is good. Or it may be that an action is worth while because it produces results which are worth while in themselves like things of beauty or a state of happiness. Good conduct is by no means the only thing in the universe that is worth while; most people agree that things like the enjoyment of beauty or conscious communion with God are also worth while, and so worthy to be called good. Indeed, it is here that the ethical use of good agrees in part with the many other uses of 'good' which may be studied in axiology. When we wish to make a moral judgement emphasizing this aspect of value or disvalue, we tend to use the terms 'good' and 'bad' rather than the terms 'right' and 'wrong'. Some people think that the term 'right' is used to connote what produces good results, but at most this is only a part of its meaning, and sometimes it does not seem to bear this meaning at all.

(b) *Obligatoriness.* When we judge a piece of conduct morally we imply that somebody *ought* to do certain actions. Very often the moral judgement comes with the force of an

order; that is why Kant calls the moral law an 'imperative', and many other ethical writers have conceived the moral standard on the analogy of the laws of a state. A superficial introspection probably suggests that most people under the influence of conscience feel under the sway of a command coming from outside, that it is an external God bidding them do something or outside society bidding them do something. A deeper reflection will show that the authority is in some sense inside of us, that in some sense it is an obligation that is imposed or at any rate accepted by the self. Even if it be God's command it is God speaking *within* our hearts. It is this obligatoriness that is one mark distinguishing conduct and other things which are ethically good from things that are good in some other way. However good we may regard the perception of a beautiful object or the experiencing of some pleasure, we do not feel the obligation to enjoy them that we feel to do good actions. Because of this, many moralists hold that this notion of obligatoriness is the fundamental notion of ethics. Many people doubt whether we can say that it is obligatory for anyone to have certain motives like sympathy or gratitude, for our motives depend largely on our given mental make-up, and it is still more doubtful whether we can say that it is obligatory for anyone to produce certain outside results, for outside results generally depend on many factors over which we can have no control. What is obligatory for a man is his setting himself to do a certain action. In emphasizing this aspect, we tend to use the phrases 'we ought to do' something or it is 'our duty' to do something.

(c) *Moral Fittingness.* Many people think that the whole meaning of an ethical judgement like 'This action is right' is contained in the notions of value and obligatoriness. When we use the term 'right', however, we are often not laying emphasis either on the value of the action or its results, or on the obligation we feel to perform it. We are rather implying that the action is suitable in some unique and probably indefinable way to the situation in which the doer finds himself, although we may also think that such an action is likely to produce results of value and that we have some obligation to do it. The rightness of an action like speaking the truth consists not merely in its producing good results, for many people would

think it still right if it produced bad results; and it does not consist in its being obligatory, for people hold that it is obligatory because it is right. Its rightness depends on its being the morally fitting thing to do in most circumstances, although not in all; it is not right to speak the truth in writing fairy tales. Some moralists hold that while goodness or value is primarily objective, so that the goodness of an action has nothing to do with the doer's attitude to it, rightness is primarily subjective. An action's rightness depends on its moral suitability and the mental attitude of the agent is the dominating factor in determining its suitability; the spirit in which help is given is more important for the rightness of the action than the nature of the help. It is certainly the case that mental conditions must be taken into account, but there is also an objective moral fittingness. A certain situation seems to call for a certain type of action, apart from its good consequences. There is a moral fittingness in a man attempting to save a drowning child, even although his inability to swim makes his action useless. This notion of moral fittingness is the chief rival of obligatoriness as the fundamental notion of ethics. It is of course most commonly expressed in the moral judgement, 'This is right,' and its opposing judgement, 'This is wrong.'

(d) *Objective Validity.* As we have already suggested, when the ordinary man says that an action is good or right he holds that he is saying something which is true, apart from his own judgement on the matter. It is of course possible that he is mistaken in this, and many theories of ethics hold that all that he is affirming is that he has a feeling of liking or a feeling of some kind of moral approval towards the action. He holds that his ethical judgement is one that can be contradicted by an opponent and that either he or his opponent is wrong in the matter. This may be put in another way by saying that the ordinary man holds that the decisions of conscience are true or false decisions in the same way that the decision of a jury that a prisoner on trial is guilty or not guilty is a true or false decision.

It has been common to distinguish between judgements of fact, the *descriptive* judgements of the ordinary positive sciences like botany or chemistry and judgements of value, the

appreciative judgements of the normative sciences. 'Water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen' is a judgement of fact. 'This picture is beautiful' and 'To speak the truth is always right' are judgements of value. The suggestion is often made that judgements of fact are more objective because they depend on the real nature of the world, while judgements of value are more subjective, because they depend more on the individual idiosyncrasies and prejudices of the person making the judgement. Both kinds of judgement are made by human minds, and so both are subject to subjective influences like lack of understanding, prejudice and personal desire, and for this reason both may sometimes be regarded as subjective. It is likely that judgements of value just because they often affect the emotional side of our nature more deeply are more affected by subjective influences than judgements of fact. It is certainly very easy to confuse the fact of our liking of a thing with the judgement that this thing has value of one kind or another. Both types of judgement can, however, be examined objectively by the standards provided by logic, and so demonstrated to be true or false. Another factor which adds to the common confusion here is the common view that a true judgement has some kind of moral superiority over a false judgement, that the man who holds true judgements is, other things being equal, a better person than the man who holds false judgements. We shall examine later those theories of ethics often called subjective theories which consider that the truth of moral judgements depends on their relations to some person's desires or emotions or opinions, but there is no doubt that the ordinary man regards his moral judgements as objectively valid.

§4. *The Object of the Moral Judgement*

We have written so far as if our moral judgements were always judgements on voluntary actions, and this is in accordance with the definition of ethics that was given in our first chapter but, as a matter of fact, in our ordinary speech we make moral judgements on a great many different kinds of objects. We speak of a good motive, good intentions, good will, high moral purpose and good character as well as of good actions. And there are moralists who hold that the

only reason for calling actions right or good is that they produce good results or good consequences. The development from the level of custom to the level of conscience has tended to make moralists attend more to the mental processes leading to an action than to the action itself or to its outward consequences. The moralist feels that, in doing so, he is getting nearer to the moral quality of the action than if he attends merely to the outward act, the form of which may be modified by outside circumstances or such considerations as the technical skill of the agent which are not directly relevant for morality.

With these considerations in view, Kant made his famous statement that there is nothing in the world or even out of it that can be called good without qualification except a good will.[1] Knowledge which may appear to be good may be used by a traitor in his treachery and so prove bad in its effects because the traitor lacks good will. Physical strength, another apparent good, may be used for bad ends, and so increase the badness of its possessor. By 'good will' Kant cannot have meant a mere desire or vague wish that may or may not lead to action; that would be probably without any moral value at all. What he meant was the firm desire and fixed purpose to do something good. It is the need of this determined effort that is expressed in the proverb 'The way to hell is paved with good intentions', intention here being used not correctly for a deliberate plan of action but for a vague desire that may not result in action at all. It might seem reasonable to define Kant's good will as the willing which leads to good actions, but this is not always the case. The act of willing of a charitable man, which leads him to give alms to a beggar, may be genuinely good, but if it result in the beggar's drinking too much and getting run over by a motor car, the action as a whole can hardly be described as good. Of course here the charitable man's act of willing had the defect of a lack of adequate knowledge of the human weakness of the recipient of the charity, but if such lack of knowledge is to prevent us from calling a piece of willing 'good will', it would follow that there never can be such a thing as a good will at all. It is safer to describe the good will as the will

[1] Kant: *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, First Section (Abbott, p. 9).

which normally tends to produce good actions, whether the action be good in itself or good because of its consequences. In attempting to confine goodness to the willing process, Kant probably made a false abstraction; it is the whole action including its mental antecedents, and also its external consequences that is good or bad, and not the abstract process of willing.

An even more definite attempt to make the proper object of the moral judgement the inner springs of action was made by Martineau, who held that our actions are to be regarded as good or bad in proportion to the goodness or badness of the motives which led to them.[1] Most people would agree with Martineau that certain motives are always bad; for example, cruelty is both bad in itself and bad because of the kind of actions and consequences which it causes. Other motives like sympathy are always good. And we do in part at least judge an action by its motive; if we believe that a father's punishment of his child is due to parental love we judge it differently from what we would, if we believe it to be due to cruelty. Martineau tended to use the word motive for the emotional state which impels a man to an action rather than for the end or aim which induces him to carry out the action, and he considered that these emotional states can be arranged in an order of value as motives, beginning with the sentiment of reverence and the 'primary affection' of compassion as the best, and ending with the 'secondary passions' of censoriousness, vindictiveness and suspiciousness as the worst. But surely the position of a motive in Martineau's list is determined in part at least by the object towards which the motive is felt; the fear of God has been reckoned as one of the highest motives by religious people, closely akin to Martineau's highest motive of reverence, while the fear of pain or the fear of other people are certainly among the lower motives, not very far removed from Martineau's suspiciousness. It is clear that for this scheme motives would need to be subdivided according to the objects to which they are attached, and Martineau makes no systematic attempt to do this. It is too a false abstraction, concealing the true value of the whole process, to separate the incentive or emotional

[1] Martineau: *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol. I, p. 266.

state impelling to action from the inducement or end aimed at in the action. What Martineau was really trying to classify are sentiments, emotional dispositions attached to particular objects and tending to certain types of action. It is certainly true that some sentiments are morally more valuable than others; the natural love for one's parents is morally better than what psycho-analysts call the Oedipus complex promoting tendencies to kill one's father. We may admit too with Martineau that reverence towards almost any object is a better attitude in a man than suspiciousness of every object. There is a good deal to be said for the view that motives are sometimes worth while in themselves; malice is almost certainly bad in itself apart from its consequences, and benevolence may be similarly good in itself. Yet the ordinary way of evaluating a motive is to consider the kind of actions it produces. Most people think of malice as bad or of benevolence as good, because malice produces bad actions and benevolence produces good actions. Most moralists would make the highest motive not reverence with Martineau but a sense of duty. Just as other motives are attractions to certain objects or activities because these are of a certain character, so the sense of duty is an attraction to certain activities on account of their being right.

The view that motive is the object of the moral judgement is often opposed by the argument that we cannot be praised or blamed for our motives because our motives cannot be produced at will. This criticism implies the unproved and probably untrue assertion that morality deals with praise and blame. Over and above this it seems the case that motives can to some extent be produced at will. It is possible for the same man to feel anger or to feel amusement when a practical joke is played on him, and to a limited extent he can *set himself* to arouse a particular motive just as he can set himself to do a particular action. It may be admitted that our capacity for setting ourselves to arouse a particular motive is more limited than our capacity for choosing an action, but it is still there. In particular it seems possible in face of a complex situation to inhibit to some extent the other tendencies to action that arise in the mind and to give attention to what our sense of duty directs. In any case, it appears that we do

judge motives as good or bad, and that when we judge an action, like the giving of alms to a beggar, we do take the motive of the giver into account; the action would be fiendishly bad if the giver deliberately was out to make the beggar drunk, but, if he gave in a spirit of benevolence, there is at least something good about the action as a whole.

The same type of argument can be used in considering the view that the moral judgement has intention as its object. We do judge intentions to be good or bad not merely in the sense in which they are paving-stones on the road to hell, but in the sense described in our second chapter of being the total plans of action which a man purposes to carry out. The Utilitarians rightly emphasized the fact that a man is responsible not only for the motive or desire which induces him to the plan of action but for all that he knows of what needs to be done in order to carry out his desire. The revolutionary is responsible not only for the Utopia or perfect state which is the aim inspiring his whole scheme of action but for the bloodshed, the suffering and the oppression which have to occur as steps in his plan of a changed world. Indeed, we must go still further and include not only those parts of the intention which the agent did not himself desire but were faced as necessary steps in his plan of action, but those things also which could have been in his mind if he had taken the trouble to reflect. We hold the driver responsible who, by his reckless driving, endangers the lives of others, although the driver himself is perfectly confident in his own mind that he is taking no unnecessary risk; we feel that he should know that he is bringing others into danger. When we are dealing with responsibility, the moral judgement on intention is accordingly more important than the moral judgement on motive, for it is the whole intended scheme for which the doer of an action is responsible. It is also more important, from the point of view of responsibility, than the judgement on action, for a man is responsible for his intention and even for what he ought to have foreseen in his intention in a way that he is not responsible for his actions which may be affected by outside conditions or his own limitations. We need not consider that a good intention has value in itself, except in so far as it contains motives that are good in themselves; ordinarily we think

of an intention as good because it normally leads to a good action. The revolutionary's intention is good if the scheme of actions and results to which it leads is good. No one believes the person who tells tales on others and maintains that he does so with the intention of doing good to these other people, when the result of his tale-bearing is obviously and repeatedly bad. The proofs of a man's intentions are his actions.

In practical life probably the most important moral judgement is that on character. The particular motive or the particular intention or even the particular action may not really represent the man's moral outlook and may never repeat itself. What is important in ordinary life is that we should know the character or permanent mental constitution of a man, and only give to a single desire or to a single action the very small importance it deserves. In this evaluation of character, motives are more important than intentions, for it is the original desire initiating a plan of action that reveals the character of its doer rather than the details it is necessary to think of in carrying it out, although these too may have a subordinate place in our judgement of character. Some people indeed hold that character is simply a collective name for the sentiments or dependable motives at work in any person. Once again we may hold that a character is worth while, or good in itself, or good because it leads to good actions. Certainly we judge a man's character by his habits of action. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,'[1] and if a character bears consistently and habitually the fruits of good actions, no one can imagine that it is really bad.

We come back to our original position that the moral judgement which is most important for ethics is the moral judgement on voluntary actions, because the other moral judgements are largely based on it. We judge a 'will', a 'motive', an 'intention', a purpose', and even 'a character' to be good in so far as each of these may be normally expected to produce a good action or good actions. None of them could keep up a claim to be regarded as good if in actual experience they normally produced bad actions. In speaking of a good action, however, we must be careful not to limit the term 'action' to the simple bodily movement of the

[1] Matthew vii. 20.

agent; the motive, intention, purpose and willing are all really parts of the action. An action done in a different spirit or with a different motive is not really the same action; speaking the truth in malice is not really the same action as speaking the truth in love. Again, it would appear necessary to include part of the results of an action—at least the intended part of the results—in the action itself. To make a statement slandering another person in a language that we know to be understood by our hearer is a different action from making exactly the same statement to a hearer whom we know not to understand the language we are using. In this way, action may to some extent include both motive and result. It is worth noting that an action may be good in two ways; it may be good in itself apart from any effects or consequences (and we have seen that motives and characters may also have this kind of goodness); or it may be good because it produces good consequences.

The fundamental nature of the judgement on action has been concealed by the fact that in practical life the other kinds of moral judgement are so often more important. In considering the worth of men for positions of importance or for undertaking things on our behalf, the judgement of character is the important judgement, and we consider that we have a truer estimate of a man's character if we know and judge his motives than if we merely know and judge his actions. In praising and blaming men, and in considering their responsibility for their actions, the judgement on intention is more important than the judgement on action. No one doubts that the act of slaying a fellow-man is bad in itself; but we judge the action very differently when we know that the motive was self-defence from the way that we judge it when we know that the motive was jealousy. Again the deliberate intention to kill one's neighbour makes the killer far more blameworthy than if there is no such intention. We do not blame the surgeon who accidentally kills his patient if he has taken all reasonable precautions in his intended plan of action to avoid killing him. Although these judgements on character, motive and intention may be practically more important, yet they all depend for their nature on the judgement on action. And this fact that all our

moral judgements are based on the judgement on action itself makes our task much more simple. In the following chapters we shall need only to inquire what it is in actions which makes them good or bad, right or wrong, or subject to the other forms of moral judgement. The meaning of good and bad motives, good and bad intentions, or good and bad characters will follow almost directly from the meaning of good and bad actions.

Chapter V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL THEORY

§1. *The History of Ethics*

The history of European ethics can be conveniently divided into three periods each with its own special characteristics. The Greek period lasted from the beginning of ethical study, which was certainly not earlier than 500 B.C., to A.D. 500. The medieval period of ethics may be dated from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500, and the modern period from A.D. 1500 onwards. Each period has its characteristic ethical institution. In the Greek period the Greek city state formed the background of the moral life, and the man who performed his duties as a citizen was regarded as a good man. In the medieval period morality was dominated by the Church and, generally speaking, the good life was identified with the holy life or the religious life. In the modern period neither Church nor state are so important in the moral life, and morality is more concerned with the free individual and his rights and duties in relation to other free individuals. While we may regard our three periods as the period of the city state, the period of the Church and the period of the free individual respectively, we must not exaggerate the differences between them. To the present day, our ethical thinking is largely determined by two influences, the free reflection that arose in the Greek city states and the moral tradition of Jews and Christians that was taught by the Church of the Middle Ages.

§2. *Greek Ethics*

The study of ethics is an outcome of that development from the level of custom to the level of conscience which we have described in an earlier chapter. When an individual realizes that his conscience shows to him the rightness of some action which other people regard as wrong, his reflection, if at all

thorough, is likely to lead him to the fundamental problem of ethics—what it is in an action that makes it right or wrong, or what is the standard or test by which we discriminate good and bad actions. While ethical reflection of this kind occurred in a vague way in many countries, it was in ancient Greece in the fifth century before Christ that European ethics really began. The Sophists were a group of teachers, generally itinerant, who were primarily concerned with the education of young men for that political career which was open to every free-born citizen in the city states of Greece. The Sophists lived in an age like our own, when there was a good deal of questioning of the value of established institutions, partly because certain of these institutions had actually outlived their usefulness (the use of Homer as a basis for all literary education, for example), and partly because there occurred at that period one of those outbursts of freedom in human thought that seem to happen periodically in the history of the human race without there being any very adequate reasons for them. The Sophists raised the moral question by asking what in the good life was according to nature, and what was merely a matter of custom or convention. The more revolutionary among them thought that all morality was a matter of human convenience, and that we call things good merely because they suit ourselves or the majority of mankind. To use the famous phrase of one of the greatest of the Sophists: 'Man is the measure of all things'; he decides for himself what is right and what is wrong, and there is no other standard.

Socrates, who is commonly regarded as the founder of Western philosophy, while he shared to the full the tendency of the Sophists to ask questions about matters of conduct, was less confident than most of his colleagues of his ability to answer these questions. This was especially unfortunate, because he considered that a thorough understanding of the nature of goodness was a necessary condition for living a thoroughly good life. He expressed this view in the maxim 'Virtue is knowledge'. Socrates' own personal goodness of character seems to have concealed from him the fact that in the case of most men good will or the purpose to do what is right is needed along with knowledge of the nature of goodness to

secure practical goodness of living. Or it may be that Socrates realized this, and that his maxim was simply his way of emphasizing the importance of a knowledge which most people regard as of no importance at all. It is not known whether Socrates himself ever made an explicit statement that morality is a matter of nature and not of custom, but this was almost certainly his view. He quoted with approval the saying 'Know thyself',[1] and this suggests that he realized that a knowledge of human nature is important for the good life, or even perhaps that goodness is natural in the sense of being based on human nature.

The two great followers of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, pursued systematically that knowledge of ethical matters which Socrates had considered to be essential for virtue. For Plato this knowledge was a metaphysical knowledge, chiefly the understanding that the real world is not the world which is perceived by our senses, but a world of realities, which Plato called 'ideas', and which are perfect types corresponding to those things that exist in imperfect forms in the world that is known to us through perception. The most fundamental of these realities is the 'idea of the good', and whatever else this implies it certainly means that goodness is natural in the sense that it is the most fundamental fact about the universe. Aristotle accepted in general the ethical position of Socrates and Plato, although there was a marked difference in his philosophical outlook, for temperamentally he was more interested in the concrete details of the moral life than in the abstract underlying principles, and we have in his *Ethics* not a description of an ideal community as we have in the *Republic* of Plato, but an analysis of the moral life as it was found in the Greek city states of his own day. Aristotle too, however, fully realized the importance of ethical knowledge.

It is perhaps an indication of the greatness of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle that, while most later schools of ethics have claimed them as among their founders, they cannot be labelled with the name of any particular ethical school. What they taught was the need and the importance of understanding the nature of goodness and, although they did not put it in this way, the truth that goodness belongs to the nature

[1] Attributed to Chilon, Thales, and Apollo (by Cicero).

of things. To understand goodness means to understand the nature of the universe as a whole, and particularly that part of it we call human nature.

There were two groups contemporary with Plato and Aristotle in which one of the fundamental cleavages between later ethical schools is already found. The Cyrenaics held explicitly that a good action is one which gives pleasure, and this is the view called hedonism which has persisted as one of the great ethical theories until our own day. The Cynics, on the other hand, held that the good life consisted in being independent of human desires and their satisfaction, so that for them pleasure had no connexion with goodness. In later Greek thought, the Cyrenaics were followed by the Epicureans, who had a more developed theory of pleasure being the one good at which men ought to aim, while the Cynics were followed by the Stoics, who found the good life in the avoidance of feeling and the rational pursuit of duty. The Stoics taught explicitly that goodness is natural, for the laws of morality are the laws of nature, perfectly rational and so comprehensible to human reason. As the desire for pleasure was of all things the most likely to lead men away from rational living, this was to be altogether avoided. In their emphasis on rational knowledge, the Stoics were true disciples of Socrates. We have in the Epicureans and the Stoics two ways of looking at the moral life. The Epicureans held that good things are those that satisfy our human desires, and particularly the desire for pleasure; this is the fundamental view of the moralists called Utilitarians in modern times. The Stoics held that a good action is an action done in accordance with some principle known to reason; this is the view of Kant and the many moralists influenced by him in modern times.

§3. *Medieval Ethics*

The spread of Christianity in Europe meant that a new emphasis was given to the individual. This helped to change the Greek outlook which had identified the good man with the good citizen and had regarded ethics as a part of politics. It also meant that more attention was given to the inner aspect of morality; it was a man's inner motives that

indicated his true spiritual state and fitted him for the life of heaven, which was the aspiration of every good man. Yet, on the whole, the Middle Ages did not encourage moral speculation and the consequent development of ethical theory. The standard of right and wrong had been given finally beyond dispute in the revelation of God's law in the Bible as it was interpreted by the Church, and to raise doubts or to ask questions was dangerous heresy if not impious blasphemy which the Church had the power to punish with a becoming severity. All that was left for ethics to do was to deduce from the principles and illustrations provided by the Bible and the Church the particular applications of these to individual cases, and so we find in the Middle Ages the teaching of casuistry or applied ethics taking a very large place. The degradation of casuistry, which has given the word its modern evil suggestion, belongs to a slightly later period.

§4. *Modern Ethics*

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Church lost the authority which it had held over the larger part of Europe for nearly a thousand years. One cause of this was an outburst of individualism, emphasizing human freedom and human accomplishment, which was largely brought about by a revival of Greek learning with its evidence of what man could accomplish apart from the Christian revelation; another cause was the division and consequent weakening of authority of the Church itself. Whatever the causes may have been, and they were by no means as simple as our statement has suggested, individual men were no longer willing to accept the decision of the priest as the final word in moral matters. Many in religious circles tried to find in the words of the Bible itself the moral authority that had formerly been given to priest and Church, and for Protestantism the final moral standard was the teaching of the Bible with a great deal of liberty of individual interpretation. More reflective people, however, felt impelled to look for a standard of right and wrong that was intelligible and acceptable to their reason, and these are the standards which we will have to examine critically in the following chapters. The various views may be classified as follows:

(a) Some thinkers maintained that the difference between right and wrong was merely subjective, depending upon the attitude of the individual making the moral judgement. For example, what a man likes is regarded by him as right; what he dislikes is regarded by him as wrong. We may include in this group all who maintain that the difference between right and wrong is merely a human convention. This had been the view of the more extreme Sophists in ancient Greece, and it became the view of all the more sceptical among modern thinkers.

(b) Some thinkers maintained that the difference between right and wrong was known by direct insight or intuitively, and the more extreme of them held that this is all that can be said about it. A moderate intuitionism was maintained both by the moral sense school of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and by the Scottish 'common-sense' school led by Reid in the eighteenth century.

(c) Some thinkers maintained that the difference between right and wrong is based on some law, but there were many different views of the nature of that law. The Greek Stoics had suggested that the moral law was both a law of nature and a law of reason, and this view was held by the greatest Christian philosopher of the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas. In the eighteenth century we find two schools of thought as to the laws underlying morality. For the one school the moral law is a law of human nature to be revealed by a study of man's psychological constitution. Butler is the leading moralist of this school, but similar views were held by Adam Smith and Hume. All of these attempted to analyse conscience or the moral sense psychologically and so to discover the basis of morality. The other school emphasized the view that the moral law is a law of reason. We find this view in the Cambridge Platonists, Clarke and Wollaston, among English philosophers, and in Kant, the German philosopher. Through Kant, this view has been developed in the modern idealism of Hegel and his followers, who maintain that the moral law is a law of logic and consequently a law of nature, for it is their metaphysical view that the structure of the universe is logical throughout.

(d) Some thinkers maintained that the difference between

right and wrong depends on the result of our actions, and particularly on their power of satisfying our desires and causing pleasure to ourselves and others. We have seen this view in the Greek schools of the Cyrenaics and Epicureans, and in the modern period it has been maintained by the great school of English Utilitarians, including John Stuart Mill and Sidgwick.

All these types of ethical theory have been affected by various influences in the course of their development. In the eighteenth century the associationist psychology prevalent among English philosophers undoubtedly led such moralists as Butler, Hume and Smith to study ethics by attempting to analyse conscience into its elements. In the nineteenth century, the study of evolution in biology affected more than one type of ethical theory, as well as trying to offer a purely evolutionary explanation of the nature of good and bad. The theory that pleasure is the moral standard was developed on evolutionary lines by Herbert Spencer; the theory of idealism was developed on evolutionary lines by Hegel in Germany and T. H. Green in England; and the theory that morality merely depends on human likes and dislikes has been developed in the modern theory of ethical relativity by Westermarck, who takes full advantage of the evolutionary study of the development of the sentiments. Another influence which has strongly affected ethical study in our own day has been the analogy of moral goodness with other forms of value. The moral sense school of the eighteenth century made a rather simple analogy between goodness and beauty, but the development of economics and the study of the nature of art have led men to examine more closely the nature of value, and there is a tendency to try to discover the nature of goodness by seeing its place in the scheme of values. To-day, under the influence of Bergson and others, the creative aspect of artistic activity is suggesting a similar creativeness in the doing of good actions.

§5. *Classification of Theories of the Moral Standard*

It is possible to arrange moral theories in many different ways, some of them so similar as to lead easily to confusion. There is first of all the difference between *absolute* and *relative*

ethics. Absolute ethics holds that there is one universal and eternal moral code which applies equally to all men of all ages, and that changing circumstances or changing opinions make no difference whatsoever to this absolute moral code. Relative or relativistic ethics holds that the moral standard varies with different circumstances, so that it may be right for an Arab nomad, but wrong for an English city-dweller, to have four wives at the same time. It is possible to believe in absolute standards of ethics and yet to hold that the particular applications of these standards are relative to circumstances, for example, to hold that the obligation to speak the truth is an absolute obligation, but to hold that a philosopher is morally bound to state both sides of the case as he knows them to be true on a debatable point of theory, while a lawyer pleading a case is only bound to state those true facts which will favour his own client.

Closely akin to the distinction between absolute and relative ethics is the distinction between *objective* and *subjective* ethics. Indeed, we may say that subjective or subjectivist ethics is that form of relative ethics which holds that the circumstances which cause variability in the moral judgement are always the mental states of a particular person. The most familiar example of subjective ethics is the view that all that I mean by calling an action good is that I myself like it. There may be forms of relative ethics that are not subjective, for example, the theory which holds that the rightness or wrongness of polygamy depends on economic conditions would be objective but relative. All absolute standards in ethics are of course necessarily objective.

Another distinction is that made between *naturalistic* and *non-naturalistic* theories of ethics. Naturalism analyses ethical concepts in terms of the ordinary descriptive sciences, and by far the commonest form of naturalism analyses ethical concepts in terms of psychology. A naturalistic theory may be subjective if the analysis is such that the nature of right or good will vary with the attitude of some person, for example the view that 'This action is right' merely means 'I like this action'. A naturalistic theory is, however, objective when the standard does not change with the changing attitude of any person, for example the ordinary hedonistic view that

the right action is one which causes more pleasure than any other possible action. In both these examples the notion of 'right' is analysed in terms of psychology, in the first case in terms of liking, and in the second case in terms of causing pleasure, so both are naturalistic theories. But in the first case it would be possible for the action to be right for A, if A liked it, and at the same time wrong for B, if B disliked it, so the theory is subjective. In the second case, if the action does actually cause the maximum possible pleasure to all concerned, it must be equally right for everybody, so the theory is objective. If the moral standard is subjective, then there can be no universal moral standards, and ethics would become to a great extent a part of the descriptive science of psychology.

Theories of ethics may be divided again into *attitude* theories in which ethical terms are defined by the *attitude* of some being or other and *consequence* theories, in which ethical terms are defined by reference to the consequences of actions. The theory which defines a right action as one that the agent likes is an attitude theory; hedonism which defines a right action in terms of its pleasant consequences is a consequence theory. Attitude theories however need not always be subjective, or even naturalistic. The theory that a right action is one that the majority of mankind likes would be objective but naturalistic; the theory that a right action is one that is commanded by God would be an attitude theory, but hardly naturalistic in the ordinary sense of naturalism. Attitude theories and consequence theories hardly include all theories of ethics; the view that the moral law is a law of nature is neither an attitude nor a consequence theory, unless we personify nature, and it is surely possible to think that the rightness of an action is affected both by its own nature and by its consequences, that is by something more than a consequence theory would include.

Theories of ethics have been divided by Professor Broad into *deontological* and *teleological* theories.[1] A deontological theory holds that the rightness and wrongness of an action depends on the action itself and not on the consequences it produces. Of course it is not always possible to say just where

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 162.

the action ends and its consequences begin; when I read a book is my understanding of it a part of my reading or a consequence of my reading? The simplest form of deontological theory is intuitionism, the view that we have a direct intuition of the rightness and wrongness of actions. All forms of intuitionism would not however be included in the deontological group; there are theories which hold that we have intuitions about the consequences of our actions, for example that we know intuitively that only actions causing the maximum possible pleasure are right, and these would certainly be relevant to the teleological group of theories. It is a question for ethics how far our intuitions give us absolute or relative standards, so we might have an absolute intuitionism or a relative intuitionism. And the question may be raised whether our intuitions are simply mysterious dictates of conscience or whether they can be analysed in other terms by the moralist. Some of the moral sense school, which is commonly regarded as an intuitionist school, held that the uncorrupted moral sense always sees those actions to be right which cause the greatest happiness of the greatest number; so, in this case what appears to be a deontological theory on analysis proves to be teleological. We shall consider intuitionist theories in Chapter VII. There are, however, other forms of deontological theory. One of the commonest is to hold that the rightness of an action depends on its conformity to some kind of law—a law of God, a law of the social group, a law given by our own conscience, a law of nature, a law of logical consistency, or even a law of evolutionary development. The term 'law', as used in this statement, is itself an ambiguous term, and we shall consider several deontological theories of the standard as law in Chapter VIII. It may be debated whether the division into deontological and teleological holds of all ethical theories or of objective theories only. If we are to include subjective theories, most of them would fall into the deontological group, but it is probably better to confine this division to objective theories.

Teleological theories are identical with the consequence theories of our last division. They hold that the rightness and wrongness of an action depends on its consequences or results. By far the commonest teleological theory has been

hedonism which holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends entirely on the pleasantness or unpleasantness which it causes. While a great deal of ethical discussion in the past has been occupied with the hedonistic theory called Utilitarianism, most teleologists to-day realize that there may be other consequences affecting the rightness and wrongness of actions as well as the pleasantness or unpleasantness that they cause. We shall consider in Chapter IX the hedonistic forms of the teleological theory, and in Chapter XI those theories which hold that the relevant consequence is the perfection of the agent, and in Chapter XII those theories which regard the consequences in terms of value generally, although here we shall need to consider also deontological views that use the notion of value. In Chapter X we shall consider evolutionary theories, which on the whole belong to the teleological group, most of them holding that it is the consequence of furthering evolutionary development which makes an action right. We shall see more than once in the sequel that it is possible to combine a deontological and a teleological theory. If we regard, for example, the moral law as a law of nature, there may be some laws of nature which make actions right apart from their consequences or there may be natural laws stating the consequences that are to be sought. And if we use the concept of value, we may find that some actions have value in themselves, while others have value because of their consequences. All this goes to remind us that any division of ethical theories into groups is somewhat arbitrary, however useful it may be in dividing the subject of our study into convenient sections.

Chapter VI

RELATIVE, SUBJECTIVE AND NATURALISTIC THEORIES OF THE MORAL STANDARD

§1. *Absolute and Relative Ethics*

Every science consists of a number of true universal statements, and, if ethics is to be regarded as a science, it must include a number of moral judgements that are true not merely for one individual but for all men or for all men of a certain group. Relative ethics maintains that there are no moral rules that apply to all men as such; there are forms of ethical relativity which would admit of standards for all the members of a limited group, and other more extreme forms in which what is right for any man is a purely individual matter, so that there is no question of any standard at all. The following appear to be the chief arguments used against absolute ethics, the view that there are universal, unchanging moral standards.

(a) There have been, as a matter of fact, a great many different moral standards both in the past and at the present day, and any attempt to say that one is better than another may be due to bias or prejudice in favour of our own. The duel which was considered the only right way of settling disputes by men of honour in the seventeenth century is now everywhere considered to be wrong. The sati or widow who burned herself on her husband's funeral pyre did an act that was regarded as good by Hindus of a former age, but was regarded as bad by the British invaders of India. In reply to this argument, it may be pointed out that modern anthropologists consider that the variations in moral codes are not as great as they were at one time believed to be. Moral codes may differ as to whether a man may have one wife or four; all are agreed that a man may not have any woman that he

likes whenever he likes. Moral codes may differ again as to the cases where lying is the lesser of two evils, but all are agreed that ordinarily speaking the truth is the right course of action. Such variety as there is in moral codes can often be explained by the fact that these codes are not statements of ultimate moral principles but are applications of such principles to the actual conditions of a particular society. The principle of chastity finds one set of applications in a community of monks vowed to celibacy but another in family life. A strong sense of honour is probably as much approved to-day as it was in the days of the duel, and wifely affection is as much regarded as good as it was in the days when the sati offered her life, but the ways in which these principles of goodness are expressed have changed with changing circumstances. There are certain factors which prevent us from seeing the fundamental resemblances in the different moral codes. (i) At different times, actions with the same name may be very different in their moral quality, and so may be judged differently without any difference in moral principle being involved. Slavery as St. Paul knew it in the Roman Empire of the first century was a very different institution from slavery as Livingstone knew it in Africa in the nineteenth century. (ii) A difference in moral judgement may be due to a difference of opinion on matters of fact, particularly on the actual consequences of action, and not to a difference in moral standard. It was too readily supposed that those who supported and those who opposed the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquors in America always differed in their moral principles; in some cases at any rate the difference was a difference in opinion as to what the actual effects of the prohibition laws were, so that if the true facts could have been made known to both parties there would have been more agreement. It is also to be remembered that existing moral codes are not regarded by the absolutist as being the absolute moral code; they are at best imperfect approximations to that code, and the fact that they are all imperfect leaves room for their differing from one another. In all these ways, it is possible that there may be one absolute moral code in spite of the many existing codes and their differences from one another.

(*b*) The view that moral judgements are based on emotions has encouraged the belief in ethical relativity, for emotions change from time to time in the same individual although he may remain in the same situation, and different individuals feel different emotions even in the same situation. There is no need to dispute Westermarck's view that moral judgements may have their origin in emotions.[1] It may be the case even now that the occurrence of an emotion like resentment is often a necessary condition to arouse in us a moral judgement condemning the action to which we feel resentment. When we feel angry with our neighbour we find ourselves condemning his bad deeds; he may have really done them and they may really be bad, but our anger was the occasion for our discovering their badness. The very most that Westermarck and his supporters can demonstrate is that emotions provide a psychological condition, in the absence of which we would not be able to make a moral judgement; if we did not feel the emotion of moral approval towards an action we would be psychologically unable to judge that the action is good. Dr. A. C. Ewing points out that our breathing is a necessary physiological condition of our making a moral judgement,[2] but no one would for this reason maintain that ethical judgements are judgements about breathing. Similarly ethical judgements are not judgements about emotions, and so do not necessarily share in the variability of emotions.

(c) The notion of the moral judgement being absolute has been attacked by the logical positivists who hold that the so-called moral judgement cannot be really a judgement at all, still less a universal scientific judgement. They hold that if a judgement is to have meaning the words of which it consists must refer to things which are directly experienced by the senses, or which are analysable into elements that can be directly experienced by the senses. They hold that the notion 'ought' is incapable of being so analysed and they are probably right in this. It follows that moral judgements are not really judgements at all but commands or wishes or

[1] Westermarck: *Ethical Relativity*, p. 60.

[2] A. C. Ewing: *Subjectivism and Naturalism in Ethics: Mind*, Vol. LIII, p. 139.

exclamations. We shall consider these views when we come to subjective theories in the next section, but it is sufficient at present to point out that logical positivism is not the only possible theory of knowledge. Other philosophers would agree with the logical positivists that the universal ethical judgement is different from the universal scientific judgement both in its nature and method of proof; but they would hold that it is universal and unconditional in a way that no judgement derived merely from observation by the senses can be.

(d) Ethical relativists point to the lack of agreement among holders of an absolute ethics as to what the basis of that ethics is. In days when the Christian revelation was widely accepted as the basis of morality in Europe, and there was a general confidence in the capacity of reason to reach true knowledge, there was little thought of ethical relativity. At the present day, when there is no such acceptance of a single religious or metaphysical basis for a moral code, the belief in ethical relativity is widespread. Relativists are certainly justified in pointing out that moral philosophers have up to the present not agreed among themselves, but this is no proof that there will always be such disagreement.

The consequences of believing that there are no absolute moral standards are such that it is difficult to believe that any sane person can accept them. (a) We not only judge actions by our own moral code, but we judge that one moral code is better than another, for example that the moral code of the ancient Israelites was better than the code of a cannibal tribe on a Pacific island. If there is no absolute standard in morals we have no right to make such a judgement, for there is nothing in respect of which we can compare the two codes. The ethical relativists say simply that we judge moral codes that are like our own to be superior to those that are unlike our own, so that our preference is simply a matter of prejudice. This hardly seems to be the case, as there are people who prefer some other moral code to that of their own society, although it is possible to argue that they may be influenced by some other prejudice. Yet it is hard to believe that the moral code of one of the higher civilizations, of the Roman

Stoics or of Christians for example, is not superior to tribal codes that permit cannibalism (although this may actually be a sign of moral decadence disapproved by every truly moral code) or the blood feud.

(b) If there is no moral superiority of one code over another, there can be no such thing as moral progress or moral decline. This is possibly the case, but it is opposed to one of the most common beliefs of our modern age.

(c) As no moral code is better than another, and no moral progress is possible, moral effort becomes meaningless. Ethical relativists deny this by saying that a man should try to be true to the code that he himself or his society professes. If this code, however, has no superiority to the scheme of conduct dictated by his appetites, why should anyone make the strenuous effort needed to obey the moral code?

(d) The logical conclusion of ethical relativity would be that no man is better than another, for every man has a certain moral outlook, however vague, which determines his actions and character. The man who sees society as an object to be preyed upon cannot be regarded as morally worse than the man who sees society as something to be loved and served, if one code is as good as another.

Most ethical relativists would say that this argument is unfair to their theory because while they deny a universal moral standard, they accept what we may call local moral standards, rules that hold for limited groups of people. But no relativist has shown how the limits of such groups are to be determined, or why the arguments that make moral standards relative to the circumstances of a particular community should not be used to make moral standards relative to each particular individual. To do so of course means that there are no standards at all. Ethical relativists are however right in holding that the ordinary moral rules which men commonly accept are not really the ultimate, unchanging, absolute principles which distinguish right and wrong. Ordinary moral rules are the applications of these principles to particular circumstances, and the ultimate principles themselves are neither perfectly known nor perfectly embodied in any existing moral code.

§2. *The Standard as Subjective*

Subjective ethics is by far the most commonly held form of relative ethics, and so deserves a special consideration. The term subjectivism is used differently by different writers, sometimes to indicate all attitude theories of ethics or even all relative theories, but we shall confine it to theories showing the two characteristics that we mentioned in the last chapter, namely (i) that the judgement that an action is right depends for its validity on the mental state of a particular person, and (ii) that because this mental state may change either in the same individual, or from one individual to another, an action may be right at one time and wrong at another or even right and wrong at the same time. The simplest case of subjectivism is the view that when I say that an action is right all that I mean is that I like this action. Meinong has pointed out that there is a confusion here between two things.[1] A judgement both expresses a state of mind and means the *object* of the state of mind. When I say 'This man deserves to be hanged', I am certainly expressing my own attitude, but the meaning of my statement is a fact that is true or false apart from my attitude to it. It is very likely that when I say 'This action is right', I am expressing my own attitude of moral approval or liking to it, and this is what subjectivists emphasize; but the validity of the judgement depends not on what it expresses but on what it means, and this needs to be established on objective grounds, not on the fact that it expresses an attitude. All subjective theories are naturalistic theories for they attempt to define ethical notions in terms of psychological notions such as liking or approval. Subjective theories vary as to the individual whose mental states determine the rightness or wrongness of the action. Most commonly it is the maker of the moral judgement whose mental states are concerned, and some people would confine the term 'subjectivism' to this type of theory. Sometimes, however, it is the doer of the action whose mental states are involved, as when we say that if a man thinks an action to be right it is objectively right for him to do it. Or the determining factor may be the mental states of some other person such as one's religious confessor.

[1] J. N. Findlay: *Meinong's Theory of Objects*, p. 28.

Dr. A. C. Ewing has distinguished between three views which may properly be called subjective in his opinion:[1] (a) the view that the moral judgement refers merely to the mental state of the person who makes it, as in our previous example that when I make the statement 'This action is right' all that is meant is 'I like this action'; (b) the view that moral judgements are not judgements at all, but of the nature of commands, exclamations or wishes so that, according to one view, 'This action is right' is merely a command to do the action; and (c) the view that moral judgements are either always false or at least incapable of being proved true.

(a) The simplest form of subjectivism is the view that all that a moral judgement asserts is that the person making it has, or tends to have, certain feelings. The statement 'This action is right' means 'I like this action', or 'When I consider this action I tend to have a feeling of moral approval towards it', or some such statement about my own feelings. Approval and liking are not the same; we may approve of a murderer being hanged without at all liking this being done. In fact, approval is not entirely a feeling state; it implies a judgement as to the rightness of what is done, so that the feeling of approval implies some other moral standard than itself. In having a feeling of approval of an action, I am implying that I consider that the action is right by some objective standard. This is in a less degree true of other feelings; my judgement that a thing is bad cannot merely mean that I am afraid of it, for a fear itself may be justifiable or unjustifiable; it is right to be afraid of snakes, but wrong to be afraid of sleeping in the dark. Similarly, likes and dislikes may be justifiable or unjustifiable.

This type of subjectivism, like other false ethical theories, can best be refuted by showing that it has consequences like the following, which no reasonable person can accept.

(i) When two persons are talking about a certain action, and the one says that it is right and the other says that it is wrong, they are not really contradicting each other. They are merely making statements of the same type as 'I like sugar

[1] A. C. Ewing: *Subjectivism and Naturalism in Ethics*: *Mind*, Vol. LIII, p. 120.

in my tea' and 'I do not like sugar in my tea', both of which can be true at the same time provided that they are made by different people. It follows that there never can be a real difference of opinion or a real argument about the rightness of an action. Few people would admit that the man who says that telling lies is always better than speaking the truth can never be proved wrong by argument, but on this view, if he adheres to his position that he likes lying better than truth-speaking, there is no arguing against his position.

(ii) This consequence of subjectivism can be put in another way by saying that when two people make the assertion 'Speaking the truth is right' they never mean the same thing. One of them means 'I, A.B., like the practice of speaking the truth'; the other means 'I, C.D., like the practice of speaking the truth'. Few people would accept that a moral judgement when made by different persons must have a different meaning in each case, and of course ethical discussion becomes again impossible.

(iii) If this view were correct the only arguments that would be relevant to the rightness or wrongness of actions would be arguments from psychology. If I wish to show that your statement, 'This action is right', is incorrect, I shall need to prove that you have made a mistake in introspection, and that you really do not know what your own mental state is. It certainly would be a remarkable boldness on my part to suppose that I know what is going on in your mind better than you do yourself. And certainly no intelligent person has ever set about refuting a moral judgement in this way.

(b) The ground of the view which holds that moral judgements are not judgements but commands, exclamations or wishes, is the theory of knowledge called logical positivism which holds that all genuine judgements are on analysis verifiable by the senses and, as moral judgements obviously cannot be verified in this way, they are not really judgements at all. There would seem no purely ethical ground for taking this view of the moral judgement, and in the light of its consequences, most moralists would be inclined to say that the ethical evidence shows that the logical positivists must be wrong somewhere in their epistemological theory of judgement. The first consequence of regarding what is commonly

called a moral judgement as a wish or a command or an exclamation, is that we cannot assert it to be true or false, for only statements (that is, judgements expressed in words) can be true or false. The so-called moral judgement is according to the view that is now being considered itself the wish or the command. For example, to call the practice of speaking the truth right is only another way of saying 'Always speak the truth', or 'Would that men spoke the truth'.

We are not, according to this view, making a judgement that we are having a wish or feeling an emotion or issuing a command; it would then be theoretically possible to say whether our judgements are true or false. However, the same arguments that we have used against the view that in a moral judgement I am merely telling about my own feelings would apply equally against the view that I am merely telling my own wishes or commands. It seems certain that when the ordinary man asks whether an action is right, he is not merely wanting to know his own wishes or feelings; he wants to know something about the action, something that can be expressed in the form of a judgement or statement. With this view also, there would be no possibility of differences of opinion or of rational arguments on moral matters. There is nothing contradictory about my wishing or commanding one thing, and your wishing or commanding the opposite; but if one person says that an action is right, another person who says that it is wrong clearly means to contradict the first speaker. The judgement 'This action is right' is not a command in ordinary speech; it is a reason for obeying a command on some occasions. This view can hardly give a reasonable explanation of the fact that we make moral judgements about past events. When I say that Brutus was wrong in killing Caesar, according to this view, I may mean that if I had been present I should have exhorted Brutus not to kill Caesar, or I should have exclaimed against his action, or I should have wished him not to do it. Yet surely it is possible to know my own nature well enough to admit that, if I had been there, I should have certainly been so influenced by public opinion and other things that I should have been altogether on the side of Brutus and his confederates urging them on, wishing them success, and exclaiming in their favour, and yet to

admit that, in the light of calm reflection over the whole affair, Brutus and those with him were wrong.

(c) The view that all moral judgements are either false or impossible to prove true is really equivalent to a complete moral scepticism. Either there is no difference between right and wrong, or nobody knows the difference. In either case a knowledge of moral standards is impossible. The strongest argument against this view is that even the most sceptically minded agree that certain actions, like speaking the truth, are normally right, and others, like murder, are normally wrong. To deny that there is any validity in such universally accepted judgements is surely going too far, for it would deny to human beings the power of expressing intelligent opinions on such matters. That is a consequence which the ordinary man would find as difficult as the moral philosopher to accept.

§3. *Non-Subjective Naturalism*

A common theory, closely akin to those that have just been refuted, is the view that when we say 'This action is right', what we mean is that all normal human beings like it or feel approval of it, or have some such attitude to it. Other theories of the same group hold that when we say that an action is right, what we mean is that a majority of mankind have a certain attitude to it, or that all of a certain group or class have a certain attitude to it, or that a majority of a certain group or class have a certain attitude to it. These theories differ from those examined in the last section in leaving open the possibility for real differences of opinion and discussion in ethics. If by saying that an action is right I mean that a majority of human beings like it, another person can contradict me and show that I am wrong by demonstrating that a majority of human beings dislike the action in question. This type of theory was held by the philosopher Hume, who held that actions were right when they aroused in a majority of mankind a sentiment of moral approval.[1] (Hume held that actions which have either directly or indirectly pleasant consequences alone aroused this sentiment.)[2] This type of

[1] Hume: *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section I (137).

[2] op. cit. Section IX, Pt. I (217).

theory does provide an outside standard for distinguishing right from wrong actions, and so is not to be regarded as subjective.

The following objections may be made to this type of theory:

(a) There are certainly cases where an individual judges an action to be right, although he knows that the majority of mankind and the majority of every group concerned with it dislike and feel moral disapproval of the action. We saw in an earlier chapter that one of the most characteristic manifestations of individual conscience is to make a moral judgement different from that of the majority of the group to which the individual belongs.

(b) If this view is correct all ethical questions about which there is a difference of opinion are to be settled by the counting of numbers. We can find out whether an action is right only by counting the number of people who like it and the number of people who dislike it, or by some similar counting of the people on each side. Now it is certainly reasonable to give serious consideration to a moral opinion that is widely held, and people often do try to justify their moral approval of an action by arguing that 'everybody feels the same about it'. Yet most people would admit that a minority is sometimes in the right. Indeed, the history of morals shows that an opinion which later becomes the opinion of the majority of a group, usually begins by being the opinion of a few enthusiasts, for example the view that slavery is wrong. What is more important in this objection is that most people would hold that there are other ways of proving actions right or wrong than by counting heads; most people for example would hold that the consequences of an action have some relevance to its rightness.

Another extremely common naturalistic theory based on psychology is that good actions and good things are actions and things which satisfy the desires of the doer of the action. An action may be good or right in being itself the object of a desire or in being the cause of such an object. It is important to distinguish this view from two others with which it may be easily confused. It may be held that a good thing is simply a desired thing, but it is only too clear that many of the things which men actually desire are bad. Or it may be held more

reasonably that by a good thing we mean a thing which would satisfy the desires of a perfect or ideal man; this may be true but it is no longer a naturalistic theory of ethics, explaining 'good' in terms of desire as it is studied in psychology. The theory with which we are dealing here realizes that many of the things which men do desire do not give them satisfaction and so are not to be regarded as good, but it holds that all actions or things which *do* give satisfaction are good. The strongest objection to this view is based on the fact that men do sometimes have evil desires, for example, the desire for another man's wife, and, for a time at least, the attainment of such an evil desire does give satisfaction. It may be true that it does not give satisfaction to a man's complete nature over a long period, but the notion of a man's *complete* nature is bringing in something other than the mere satisfaction of desire.

This raises the question of naturalism in another form. Most people would agree that ethics deals with ideals or notions of perfection, and the question arises whether an ideal can ever be described in purely natural terms. Professor Broad says that it can and cites as examples a perfect gas or a frictionless fluid.[1] For the moralist the question is whether perfect moral actions or ideal human nature can be so described. All naturalistic theories are, from one point of view, an attempt to do so. Spinoza attempted to define good conduct as conduct appropriate to the characteristic function of the species,[2] but naturalists seem to have considerable difficulty in deciding what is the characteristic function of man, and even then there may be different kinds of appropriateness, and moral appropriateness may be incapable of a purely naturalistic explanation. However, this is a form of naturalism which will have to be considered later when we discuss the moral law as a law of human nature, or when we discuss the moral standard as human perfection.

The most common form of naturalism holds that ethical notions can be explained entirely in terms of psychology, and this may be called psychological naturalism. It includes not only attitude theories like the subjective theories we

[1] C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 262.

[2] C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 55ff.

examined in our last section and the group attitude theories we examined at the beginning of this section, but also such consequence theories as hedonism, which defines rightness in terms of the consequence of causing pleasure, which is of course a mental state, that can be described in terms of psychology. This view will be considered in our chapter on the standard as pleasure. Professor C. D. Broad considers that the view that what is right is what is commanded by God is a form of theological naturalism, explaining right in terms of theology,[1] but theology is hardly a natural science in the sense that the sciences based on sense-observation are, and to call such a definition naturalistic seems likely to lead to confusion; we shall consider this view as one form of the standard as law, namely, that what is right is in accordance with the law of God. Again, the view that what is good is what appears later in the course of evolution may be called evolutionary naturalism, a view that we will consider in our chapter on the standard as determined by evolution. All these non-subjective forms of naturalism differ from subjectivism in providing objective moral standards which apply equally to all the individuals of a group, or even to all mankind. In other words, they leave open the possibility of a scientific system of ethics, and many of the best known of ethical theories, hedonism in its many forms for example, are non-subjective naturalistic theories. Their distinguishing mark as we have already seen is that ethical notions can, according to them, be analysed entirely in terms of one of the natural sciences.

§4. *The Naturalistic Fallacy*

The fallacy which is present in every naturalistic theory has been explained by Dr. G. E. Moore somewhat in this way.[2] Good or goodness is indefinable; all naturalistic theories attempt to define good and, in so doing, commit the naturalistic fallacy. Dr. Moore holds that all that we can do in ethics is to define one moral concept in terms of another moral concept. We may define 'right' or 'ought' in terms of the notion 'good'; for example, 'A right action is one that leads

[1] C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 259.

[2] G. E. Moore: *Principia Ethica*, I.B., §§ v–xiv.

to a good consequence'. If, however, we try to define 'good', our only hope of doing so would be by a somewhat roundabout definition bringing in the term 'right', or an equivalent ethical term, so that our definition would be really circular and not a definition at all. So we are forced to admit that good is indefinable.[1]

The fundamental truth in Dr. Moore's argument can be seen by taking any common naturalistic definition of good; for example, good is productive of pleasure. The question is not whether this statement is true or false, but whether it gives an adequate definition of good. Many statements are true, which make no claim to give a definition; no one in saying that buttercups are yellow imagines that he is giving a definition of buttercups. Dr. Moore himself admits that good actions are, as a matter of fact, productive of pleasure. Some may even go so far as to say that productiveness of pleasure is part of the meaning of the term 'good', but not the whole of its meaning, so that it cannot serve as a definition. Others may maintain that what causes an action to be good is the fact that it produces pleasure, but a statement of what causes an action to be good is not a definition of goodness; we might similarly say that light of a certain wave-length causes the colour yellow, but this would not be a definition of yellow. What Dr. Moore needs to prove is only that 'good' includes something more than productivity of pleasure or any other natural characteristic in its connotation. This is a question which can only be decided by introspection, or by seeing what we mean in our own minds when we use the term 'good'. Do we mean merely 'producing pleasure'? If so, the statement 'All good actions produce pleasure' is a tautological

[1] Dr. Moore's chief point was made as long ago as the sixteenth century by the English divine, Richard Hooker. In his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker wrote (Book I, Chapter 8, §ii): 'And of discerning goodness, there are but these two ways, the one the knowledge of the causes whereby it is made such; the other the observation of those signs and tokens which, being always annexed with goodness, argue that where they are to be found there also goodness is, although we know not the cause by force whereof it is there.' Dr. Moore holds that there is no way of knowing the causes whereby goodness is made such and that the subject-matter of ethics is limited to the observation of those signs and tokens which are always annexed with goodness.

statement in which the predicate adds nothing to the subject. All it asserts is that pleasure-producing actions produce pleasure. Most people would deny that in making such a statement they are simply making a repetition of the same notion in subject and predicate. And honest introspection almost certainly would show that they are not giving a definition, for they would admit that it is possible to doubt and argue about the statement that good actions produce pleasure in a way that it would be nonsensical to discuss whether pleasure-producing actions produce pleasure. It appears from this that for most normal human beings the concept 'good' and the concept 'productive of pleasure' are not identical, and the same would be true of any other naturalistic definition of good. Dr. Moore goes still further and maintains that the same type of argument would apply to what he calls metaphysical theories of ethics, which attempt to define good in terms of things in a supersensible sphere, so that these definitions too commit the naturalistic fallacy. When Kant defines 'good' in terms of a supersensible will, he is committing this fallacy. Again, when we say that 'good' means commanded by God, we are not really defining 'good', for most people feel that a good action would still be a good action even if it were not commanded by God.

Those who have opposed Dr. Moore's view generally suggest that if we cannot define 'good', the fundamental notion of ethics, then the study of ethics becomes impossible. If Dr. Moore's theory be true, we simply know 'good' intuitively, and that is the end of the matter. Even if we admit that definition by analysis, Dr. Moore's type of definition, is the only possible kind of definition, we still may maintain that ethics can contain a great many universally true statements about good. To take an analogous example, 'yellow' is a notion that cannot be analysed into any simpler notions; it can only be known by a direct apprehension of the colour, so that for the man born blind, who cannot have such a direct apprehension, the colour remains unknowable. By Dr. Moore's argument, 'yellow', like 'good', would be indefinable. Yet many true scientific statements can be made about 'yellow'. It can be described in terms of the wave-length with which it is correlated in physics, although

the colour sensation is certainly not identical with the wave-length. It can be stated that yellow is the complementary colour of blue, that it is the limit of a series of colours passing from red through orange, that it is the colour of certain natural objects like buttercups and sulphur, and so on. Even if we agree with Dr. Moore that 'good' is indefinable, there still can be made a great many universally true statements about 'good'. As we have already seen, those who say that good is always productive of pleasure, or that good is always commanded by God, may very well be making such true statements; only they are not defining good.

What is more open to criticism in Dr. Moore's theory is the implication that definition by analysis is the only scientific form of definition. This ultimately depends on Dr. Moore's metaphysical position that the nature of a thing and particularly of a universal like 'good' is not determined in any way by other things and their nature. To use his own quotation in his *Principia Ethica*: 'Everything is what it is and not another thing.'[1] This position is denied by many forms of metaphysics including modern idealism which holds that the nature of a thing or of a universal is often determined by its relation to other things or universals. If we accept this or a similar view we may believe that there is another kind of definition than by the analysis of wholes into parts. We may define an unanalysable part by showing its place within the whole to which it belongs, and many of the so-called metaphysical theories of ethics attempt to define good by showing its relation to other things and its place in the whole scheme of reality. For Dr. Moore's 'logical atomism' this is impossible, because the relations of good to other things and its place in the scheme of things can, according to his view, tell nothing about its real nature.

It is possible to suggest one element that is not included in all naturalistic definitions of 'good' or 'right' in terms of psychology, and that is the element which we have called 'obligatoriness'. No definition of 'good' in terms of our attitude to it (as when we say that all that we mean by a good action is an action that we ourselves like), or in terms of the effect it has on our minds (as when we say that 'good' means

[1] Quoted from Bishop Butler on title-page of *Principia Ethica*.

'productive of pleasure') can explain why we feel it obligatory to do what is good in quite a different way from that in which we feel obliged to do what we like or to give ourselves pleasure. Similarly, in the case of evolutionary naturalism, it is very difficult to see why we should feel obliged to do what comes later in the course of evolution merely because it comes later. The theory that Professor Broad calls theological naturalism does seem to provide some explanation of the feeling of obligatoriness, and particularly of that emotion of awe which is aroused in us both by the moral law (according to Kant) and by the idea of God. Yet, as we have already suggested, good would still be good and presumably retain its obligatoriness even if it were not commanded by God. It is doubtful, too, whether any definition of 'good' and 'right', in terms of natural science, can include the notion of 'moral fittingness', but this point will be examined more fully when we consider the moral law as a law of nature. It is certainly one of the advantages of those deontological theories of ethics which regard the moral standard as a law that they can give a more adequate place to the notions both of 'obligatoriness' and 'moral fittingness' than other ethical theories, and particularly than those which are entirely naturalistic.

§5. *Conclusion.*

The survey of theories in this chapter may be summed up as follows. (a) In order that our moral judgements should have any real validity, it appears necessary to suppose that there are absolute moral standards, however much the applications of these may be modified by varying circumstances. (b) No subjective theory of ethics is valid. Apart from the general arguments against all relative theories of ethics, there are consequences of these subjective theories which no reasonable person can accept. (c) In the case of non-subjective naturalistic theories of ethics many of them seem to make true universal statements on moral matters which must be included in any complete science of ethics. It is probable, however, that ethical notions can never be defined in terms of the ordinary descriptive sciences, which are based entirely on the observation of the senses in the other sciences and on introspection in psychology. In particular, such definitions will

not include the notion of 'obligatoriness' nor, in most cases, that of 'moral fittingness' which seem to be essential elements in the connotation of such terms as 'good' and 'right'. The question whether ethical notions can be defined in terms of supersensible realities is a more difficult one, and one which, in spite of Dr. Moore's assertion that 'good' is always indefinable, must be left unanswered at this stage of our ethical study.

Chapter VII

THE STANDARD AS GIVEN BY INTUITION

§1. *The Nature and Objects of Intuition*

An intuition is 'the immediate apprehension of an object by the mind without the intervention of any reasoning process'. A moral intuition is, accordingly, one that apprehends some moral object immediately, without there being any reasoning about it. There are three possible objects of moral intuitions. (a) We may know directly that one particular act, such as the assassination of Caesar by Brutus, is right. To have this intuition does not imply that political murder would be right in any other case. The theory which holds that the only way of knowing rightness and wrongness is by such intuitions of the rightness or wrongness of individual actions is called by Sidgwick 'perceptional intuitionism',[1] but may be more appropriately called 'individual intuitionism',[2] dealing as it does with intuitions about individual actions. (b) We may know directly without reflection that a certain class or kind of actions is right or wrong; for example that telling the truth is always right. The theory which holds that this is the only way of knowing the rightness or wrongness of actions is called by Sidgwick 'dogmatic intuitionism',[1] but may be more appropriately called 'general intuitionism',[2] dealing as it does with intuitions about classes of actions. (c) We may know directly some moral principle by which we can judge actions to be right or wrong. We may know intuitively for example that any action which treats a man merely as a means is always wrong. We may call this 'universal intuitionism',[2] dealing as it does with the universal principles of ethics.

We can say without fear of contradiction that human beings do have intuitions of all these three kinds. One man can

[1] Sidgwick: *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 8, Sections iii–iv.

[2] These terms are taken from Paton's *The Good Will*, pp. 135–145.

say with as much confidence as if he were guided by Socrates' daemon that it is wrong for him to accept a certain invitation, and refuses to give any reason for his decision except that his conscience tells him that it is wrong. A great many people hold that to tell a lie is always wrong even in circumstances where great good would result, as when a falsehood might save a household of innocent people from a murderous assault. And some people claim that they know certain moral principles intuitively, for example that goodness ought to be accompanied by happiness.

There are certain objections to all three kinds of intuitionism. (a) While it is true that there are some actions and some classes of actions and some principles that we know intuitively to be right or wrong this is by no means true of every action or every class of action or every moral principle. Most of us face situations when we doubt which action is right, and there are classes of action, for example, the selling of intoxicating liquors, about which there is similar doubt. Even an ethical principle like the principle that virtue ought to be accompanied by happiness, while it is self-evident to some people, is very debatable in the opinion of others. (b) It may be true that intuition of all three kinds works fairly well in normal circumstances, but it does not work in unusual cases. It is self-evident that we should speak the truth until we come to the unusual case where our doing so seems likely to involve the sacrifice of innocent lives. Then we have no intuition to guide us. (c) People make mistakes in their intuitions. The use of the term 'intuition' by religious people and mystical philosophers, for example by modern interpreters of the Hindu Upanishads, suggests that there is something infallible about intuition, but unfortunately this does not seem to be the case in any sphere. A person may judge directly that a certain object is beautiful which to the trained eye is crude and imperfect. Similarly in the eighteenth century it was self-evident to the ordinary man that nobody could send a message from London to America in five minutes, but the invention of the telephone has shown this intuition to be wrong. Again, it is almost certain that those who condemned heretics to burn at the stake were obeying the intuitions of their own consciences, but most people would now agree that

their intuitions were wrong. (d) Conscience provides too many and too varied intuitions to form an ethical system. Are we to obey our own particular intuition about an individual act, or the general intuition that actions of that class are wrong, or a deduction that we make from some self-evident moral principle about the matter? These do not always agree with one another. A conscientious person who sees very clearly that lying is always wrong may find that it seems right to lie in a particular case, and intuition shows him no way out of his difficulty. (e) This last objection implies that intuitions sometimes contradict one another. Justice points to one course of action, and mercy to another. (f) Intuitionism fails as an ethical theory, because in every case it is possible to give a reason for what our intuitions dictate. In ordinary life we are constantly doing so. After stating that our conscience tells us that a certain action is right, we go on to explain why it is right.

It is because of this last objection that in the history of ethics intuitionism has taken two forms. One theory, which is really the strict theory of intuitionism, holds that all intuitions are unanalysable. When we have an intuition that the killing of Caesar was right, or that telling lies is always wrong, all we can say is that we have the intuition and this is the last word on the matter. Nothing more can be known about the morality of the action or class of actions in question. So there is no analysis or justification of the dictates of our conscience. Such a theory would reduce ethical study to a mere description of our various intuitions, and in the case of individual intuitionism would leave open the possibility of extreme subjectivism, for it is certain that different people often have different intuitions about the same particular action. It may be the case that if our general and universal intuitions were more accurately expressed than they usually are, they would prove to be the same in all persons and so escape the taint of subjectivity. This is not the case at present when they often seem to be different in different people. The other form of intuitionism holds that our intuitions, although actually valid, can always be analysed, explained and justified by rational argument. Hutcheson, one of the founders of the moral sense school, maintained, for example,

that the moral sense always approves what is beneficial to society as a whole or what leads to 'the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers'.[1] Such thinkers are really giving up intuitions as the final moral standards in ethics; our intuitions for them become merely convenient guides indicating to us those actions which are to be justified or condemned on other grounds.

Intuitionism is often confused with deontology. Rashdall, for example, defines intuitionism as the theory that 'actions are proved right or wrong *a priori* without reference to their consequences',[2] but, as we shall see in our next chapter, there can be deontological theories other than intuitionism holding such standards as the law of reason or the law of nature. Strictly speaking, we should confine the term 'intuitionism' to the theory that the only criterion by which right can be distinguished from wrong is intuition or direct apprehension without reflection, but it will be convenient and in accordance with the custom of writers on ethics to use the term 'intuitionism' for any ethical theory in which intuitions play a large part. It is in this sense that we shall include the theories of the English eighteenth century 'moral sense' school, and of Butler in this chapter, before we go on to examine critically the three kinds of intuitions.

§2. *The Moral Sense School*

Shaftesbury (1671–1713) held that goodness in man required the existence together and proper balancing in the mind of (a) *natural affections* towards others, like love and sympathy, and (b) *self-affections* directed towards the agent's own welfare, like love of life and ambition. It is possible for a man to judge by reason how to keep the balance between these two sets of affections, but these affections themselves arouse a new kind of affection called the 'moral sense', which is a natural feeling leading us to approve of some things and to disapprove of others, and serving in itself as an impulse towards good conduct. When uncorrupted, the moral sense is always in harmony with the judgements made by reason. It may be

[1] Hutcheson: *Inquiry, Essay on Moral Good, III*, §viii, Edition 4, pp. 180, 181.

[2] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Bk. I, Ch. 4, §i (Vol. I, p. 80).

corrupted by habitually evil conduct or false religious views, but Shaftesbury held that it never can be corrupted by honest philosophical speculation or 'free-thinking'.[1] In this he differed from many religious people in his day and in ours, who hold that 'free-thinking' is morally dangerous in leading the conscience astray. With regard to the nature of the moral sense Shaftesbury begins by comparing it to a sense of smell: 'I would avoid being nasty when nobody was present . . . because I had a nose';[2] but he goes on to maintain that a cultivated taste, the taste of the 'moral connoisseur', is the true guide. 'To philosophize in a just signification is but to carry good breeding a step higher.' In passing from a simple sensation like that of smell or taste to the capacity of making complicated judgements like the judgements of aesthetics, Shaftesbury does have the support of common speech. The 'tea-taster' uses the ordinary sense of smell, but by education and practice comes to *judge* the quality of tea through its smell. And we speak of the man with a capacity for making aesthetic judgements or the connoisseur as a 'man of taste'. Shaftesbury certainly regarded the moral sense as a capacity which can be cultivated and improved.

Shaftesbury's successor, Hutcheson (1694–1747) distinguished between the material goodness and the formal goodness of an action.[3] The material or objective goodness of an action is determined by the fact of its actually causing the 'greatest happiness for the greatest numbers', a phrase which Hutcheson anticipated the Utilitarians in using. The formal goodness of an action is determined by the fact of its flowing from good affection in a just proportion, and the moral sense is our guide and often our motive to such formal goodness. With Hutcheson, the moral sense led particularly to benevolent actions which he regarded as entirely disinterested in motive, but as actually or materially always leading to the agent's own true interest. For Hutcheson the final moral

[1] Shaftesbury: *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (See especially Bk. I, Pt. III).

[2] Shaftesbury: *Characteristics* (*An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*), Pt. III, Sect. iv (Quoted Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 3, Pt. II, §viii).

[3] See Sidgwick: *History of Ethics*, Ch. 4.

standard was not the intuition of the moral sense; it was rather the actual consequences of the action in society.

We may regard the moral sense view as making an analogy between our moral capacity of judging between good and bad actions, and our aesthetic capacity of judging between beautiful and ugly objects. Psychologically both have the appearance of being feelings or emotions, and the moral sense of the eighteenth century was always regarded as a feeling, but actually both involve the making of judgements. Some people have even held that the two are identical. The Greeks often used the same term, 'τὸ καλόν' for the beautiful and the good, and some of the Stoics had a maxim 'Only the beautiful is good',[1] although this is not to be thought of as an essential part of Stoic doctrine. Modern writers have also held that there is at least a close resemblance, if not a partial identity, between goodness and beauty. We certainly feel something of the same admiration for a noble deed as we do for a great work of art, and hold that a great work of art as such has a moral as well as an aesthetic value. Aristotle held, for example, that tragic drama has a purging or purifying effect upon the emotions. Yet in the work of art the material embodiment has an importance it does not have in the moral action, where the intentional attitude of the mind counts more.

The aesthetic judgement is itself a complicated kind of judgement, about which there is a good deal of philosophical dispute. It is said that 'there is no disputing about tastes', and this certainly appears to be true. The man who sees an object to be beautiful would be merely insincere if he gave up his own self-evident judgement for that of the skilled critic or connoisseur who regards the object in question as ugly. His state of mind is analogous to that of the man whose conscience tells him that an action is wrong, although his moral guides say that it is right. Aesthetic taste, however, like conscience, can be educated. The influence of teachers and companions with a developed power of aesthetic judgement, the influence of beautiful objects in one's environment, the practice of those arts which create things of beauty and, to a less degree, the theoretical study of aesthetic standards

[1] Perhaps originally from Plato: *Lysis, XIII.*

may help to educate the man of crude, uncultivated taste in the direction of becoming a skilled critic or connoisseur. The principles on which such skilled critics make their judgements are, to some extent at any rate, objective standards which can be studied in the normative science of aesthetics, just as our moral standards can be studied in the normative science of ethics.

Does this analogy ever amount to an identity? It is likely that moral standards are even more objective than aesthetic standards, that while we may in some cases regard contradictory judgements as possible in aesthetics, we can never do so in ethics. It may even be suggested that what is objective in an aesthetic judgement is really a moral judgement.[1] Much of the beauty of a work of art may be merely 'in the eye of the beholder', but there is also in it an objective value which is independent of the beholder; and this objective value may be a moral value. If we agree with the teleologists in regarding right actions as actions which produce good consequences, then we may hold that things of beauty or works of art are among these good consequences, so that a man producing a thing of beauty is so far doing a right or good action. Again, it may be the case on a deontological view that one of the characteristics which makes an action good in itself apart from its consequences is that it has the quality of beauty. The self-sacrifice of Antigone in performing the funeral rites of her brother forbidden by the law of the state, or the action of that 'very gallant gentleman', Captain Oates, in walking out to his death in an Antarctic blizzard on the chance of helping to save his comrades, have about them the beauty that makes actions good.

Professor Broad suggests that the rightness of an action may consist in its 'fittingness' to the circumstances or whole situation in which it occurs.[2] It is normally fitting to give a true answer when one is asked a question, apart from the consequences of doing so. The beautiful actions which we have just mentioned, those of Antigone and Captain Oates, were supremely fitting in unique situations, although they had actually no very good results, apart from that of providing

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil,* Bk. I, Ch. 6, Note.

[2] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 219.

a noble example to others. If there be such a moral fittingness it is closely analogous to aesthetic fittingness, and it is known intuitively; so the 'moral sense' would be an appropriate name for such an intuitive capacity.

§3. *The Theory of Butler*

Bishop Butler (1692–1752) used the term 'conscience' rather than the term 'moral sense' for the intuitive faculty, and the change is significant, for with Butler the knowledge of right and wrong is a matter of reason rather than of feeling. Butler's sermons repeatedly urge that it is reasonable to obey the commands of conscience, and it is the 'sweet reasonableness' of Butler's theory that makes him one of the most acceptable of English moralists. Butler taught that the human mind is a constitution, or, as we would now call it, an 'organic whole', consisting of many elements of which some are naturally subordinate to others. We may take as an example of a constitution the British constitution, in which the King, the House of Lords and the House of Commons have each their special functions and their constitutional relations to one another. Similarly, in the constitution of the human mind there are different elements with natural relations to one another of superiority and subordination. Because Butler maintained that these relations are natural we must regard him as one of those who hold that the laws of morality are laws of nature, and not merely matters of custom or convention.

There are in the mind a number of particular 'passions' or 'impulses' as we would now call them, which lead us to pursue different objects. For example, the impulse of hunger leads us to eat food, the impulse of fear leads us to run away and escape from danger, and the impulse of pity leads us to help others in distress. Butler sees that, although the satisfaction of every one of these impulses is accompanied by pleasure, none of them directly aims at pleasure; it is, for example, food and not pleasure that we seek when we are hungry. It is true that men do desire and seek pleasure, but the desire for pleasure presupposes a desire, the object of which is distinct from pleasure. Only in so far as we desire that object can we find pleasure in its attainment and make

that particular pleasure our aim. In other words, Butler refutes psychological hedonism by demonstrating that our impulses do aim at other things than pleasure.

In the constitution of the human mind there are set over the particular impulses one or two rational calculating principles. About one of these, the principle of self-love, through which a man deliberately aims at his own happiness, Butler's language was perfectly clear. About the other, the principle of benevolence, there is a good deal of doubt as to what Butler's teaching really was. Butler certainly held that they both are natural tendencies of human nature, and that the particular impulses are naturally subordinate to them. The man who allows himself in a fit of anger to do things which are neither to his own interest nor to the interest of others is behaving in an unnatural way. The interpreter of Butler is tempted to describe the principle of benevolence as a principle which rationally and deliberately aims at the happiness or welfare of all men everywhere (with the exception of the agent himself), and this would certainly be the principle of benevolence in its most perfect form. Butler, however, used the term benevolence for the tendency to seek the good of others, even when that tendency is lacking in universality or even rationality. Accordingly, he sometimes spoke of benevolence as if it were a particular impulse with its object to help some other person on the same level as the other 'particular passions' and not a rational principle to which all particular impulses are subordinate. In actual experience it is difficult to make a sharp distinction between the 'benevolence' which is a particular impulse, like that of the man who gives a shilling thoughtlessly to a beggar in rags, and the 'benevolence' which is a rational principle like that inspiring Utilitarian philosophers and other social reformers; there are endless intermediate varieties of benevolence. The benevolence of most people is probably nearer the impulsive level, an unreflective tendency to help others in apparent need rather than a cool, calculating principle. Just as the particular impulses when they are carried out give us as an accompaniment that pleasure to ourselves which is the object of self-love, so benevolence in all its forms when successfully carried out is accompanied by pleasure and ministers to our

own self-love. Indeed the satisfactions which arise to the agent from doing benevolent actions are among the strongest and most lasting of human satisfactions, and Butler was right in emphasizing that, in this way, there is nothing contradictory between self-love and benevolence. According to A. E. Taylor, Butler regarded benevolence as a case of joining conscience to a particular passion.[1] If we regard conscience as primarily a rational principle, and Butler certainly regarded it in this way, then both self-love and benevolence in so far as they are rational calculating principles will be under the sway of conscience.

Conscience is the element in human nature which is naturally superior even to self-love and benevolence, and its decisions are final. Here too conscience has its authority from its natural position in the constitution of the human mind, 'as from its very nature manifestly claiming superiority over all others'.[2] This is what has been called the authoritative aspect of conscience, and the fact that conscience seems to make its decisions directly and intuitively is our justification for including Butler's theory among the intuitionist theories of ethics. Butler, however, held that conscience is reflective as well as intuitive; it is the principle of reflection upon the law of rightness. The principles on which conscience gives its decisions are principles which are 'luminous to the understanding'. This explains certain passages in Butler's sermons in which he seemed to put self-love on the same level as conscience,[3] for in his view they are, in respect of being rational principles, on the same level. In the eighteenth century it seemed to most men that the reasonable course of action is to seek one's own welfare or happiness, and this is the principle of self-love. Butler maintained, however, that it is the same reason which underlies the decisions of conscience, so that ultimately what conscience directs is likely to lead to the agent's own welfare. Butler would probably have agreed with the common view of his time that wanton indifference to one's own happiness is unreasonable and consequently wrong. There are passages in which Butler did not make it

[1] *Mind*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 342.
[2] Butler: *Sermon, II.*
[3] e.g. Butler: *Sermon III* (especially closing paragraph).

clear that conscience should always overrule self-interest, but it must be remembered that Butler was not merely a student of theoretical ethics. In his office as a Christian bishop he was rather a moralizer endeavouring to lead men to obey their consciences, and an argument that would appeal to the rather easy-going people of England in the eighteenth century before the Wesleyan revival was the argument that what conscience bade them do was the reasonable line of action and the one conducive to their own individual happiness. Butler left unanswered the question whether conscience bids us directly and unconditionally seek our own interests and pursue our own happiness. He probably would have agreed that introspection shows us that conscience does no such thing, but that the providence of God has so ordered the universe that what is commanded by conscience actually always leads to our own happiness and interests.

§4. *Individual Intuitions*

When an individual sees directly that a particular action is right for him at the present moment, and there is no opportunity for further reflection on the matter, most moralists would agree that the individual ought to act on his intuition. There are two considerations which support this common view. (i) In almost every sphere of activity the practised agent forms habits of action which give him the power in a particular case to see immediately or intuitively the right thing to do, and to carry it out. The practised tennis-player does not need to deliberate which rule to follow and what kind of stroke to take as the ball comes towards him; he automatically sees how to deal with the ball, and does so without any reflection. The good man is in the same practised condition in dealing with moral situations. (ii) A moral situation may be to some extent unique. As we have just seen we respond to moral situations that often occur by habitual actions, which do not require conscious guidance at all, or by the application of some rule. It is a new situation that most frequently arouses our conscience to make a moral decision, and this decision is often something more than looking for the particular moral rule which should be applied in the new situation. Conscience has to see what action is

morally fitting for the new and perhaps unique circumstances, and this discovery of what is morally fitting appears to be an intuitive rather than a reflective act of the moral consciousness. We may admit that here as elsewhere the more reflection we do the better; but often there is not time for reflection, and even when there is, insight into the right thing to do at the moment seems to be a direct intuition rather than a consequence of reflection.

Such a direct intuition may in many cases be wrong. The individual having it may not have had either the experience of life or the practice in goodness which educate the conscience so that his intuition may be as crude as that of the child who sees directly a beauty in the combination of two gaudy colours that 'clash' with one another to the practised eye. There are too in all probability other considerations than 'moral fittingness' which affect the rightness of actions, and although 'moral fittingness' seems to be realized intuitively, these other considerations may be discoverable in other ways. They may include the results produced by our actions and their conformity to certain laws, such as the laws of nature or the law of God, and these may be better known by rational reflection than by intuition. And we should certainly reject intuitions which contradict one another, just as we would reject contradictory judgements in every other sphere of knowledge. We use this kind of argument very commonly in moral matters. We say, for example, 'You cannot believe this action to be right, when you believe that action to be wrong', or 'You cannot think it is right to kill a German, when you think it is wrong to kill an Englishman.'

The particular intuition has considerable usefulness in the moral life, and it may be the only guidance available for the individual in a situation which requires immediate action. There is, however, nothing miraculously infallible about it. Its validity depends largely on the moral experience behind it and on its consistency with other moral judgements. In one respect alone, namely in seeing the unique action 'morally fitting' to unique circumstances, there seems to be no other guide than intuition, but it is possible that even here we are dealing with the automatic reaction of the trained mind perceiving something that could also be discovered by the

slow processes of reasoning and deliberation. The question for students of ethics is what are the principles, if any, on which this intuitive aspect of conscience works when its judgements are valid.

§5. *General Intuitions*

Many people believe that we know intuitively that certain kinds of action are always right and that other kinds are always wrong, for example that helping the poor is always right and that lying is always wrong. Certain people, as we have already seen, do have such intuitions, and even refuse to admit that their intuitions are incorrect when they are shown to be logically inconsistent in holding them. For example, the intuition that all lying is wrong forbids us to tell a lie even in order to save a man's life, even although we have at the same time the intuition that it is always our duty to do what we can to save the lives of others. In such a situation the intuitionist can only maintain that he is bound to do an action which is in some respects wrong, but in that case he would require either a principle or a particular intuition to tell him which wrong to do in this particular situation. The fact is that our intuitions do not provide us with universal moral rules valid without exception in any circumstances; they only point out to us what Sir David Ross calls 'prima facie obligations',[1] that is classes of action which tend to be obligatory for most people in most circumstances. They provide us with rules which guarantee that any action which falls under them *tends* to be right.

Sidgwick pointed out that these general intuitions provide rules which are valid in most cases, but that there are some cases falling under any of these rules where the intuition is doubtful or even invalid.[2] It is true that in most circumstances killing is wrong, but there are cases where the wrongness of killing is commonly denied, as in killing in self-defence, and there are cases where its wrongness is debated, as in inflicting capital punishment or in fighting wars that are not clearly wars of self-defence. Sidgwick maintained that general intuitions are not intuitions at all, but generalizations

[1] Ross: *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 84.

[2] Sidgwick: *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. III; Bk. IV, Ch. 3.

made from experience about the types of conduct which lead or do not lead to the general happiness of society. When the intuition appears self-evident and certain, as in dealing with common cases of murder, then there is no doubt that to commit murder is conduct opposed to the general happiness of society, but in doubtful intuitions like those with regard to capital punishment there is in fact a great deal of doubt as to whether such conduct is really for the advantage or disadvantage of society as a whole. In such doubtful cases, our way of deciding the matter is, according to Sidgwick, not by intuition, but always by an appeal to consequences. In the case of capital punishment we ask whether the execution of the criminal is likely to have good or bad consequences to our society as a whole.

Sidgwick appears to have been right in holding that such general rules of morality are often not given by direct intuition but are generalizations. They may, however, be generalizations of other kinds than the teleological generalization of types of conduct which lead to advantageous results. They may, for example, be generalizations of the particular intuitions which were described in our last section. If a person repeatedly has had the intuition in particular cases that to speak the truth in this particular case is right, it will be convenient for him to make from these particular insights a general rule that truth-speaking is always right, whatever its consequences may be.

Two objections to the view that the sole standard of morality is our intuition of the rightness and wrongness of classes of actions may be mentioned. (i) This view ignores the fact that what gives moral value to an action is often the spirit in which the action is done as much as the actual action itself. Speaking the truth in a spirit of enmity or malice is certainly morally inferior to what St. Paul calls 'speaking the truth in love'.[1] It may be that on closer examination our intuition proves to be that all actions of a certain type done in a certain spirit are right, but, in judging the spirit of an action, we generally take into account its intended consequences, and most intuitionists are at pains to deny that consequences affect the rightness or wrongness of actions. (ii) This view

[1] Ephesians iv. 15.

takes insufficient account of the circumstances in which an action is done. It is surely more wrong to tell a lie in giving evidence in a court than in describing one's fishing exploits in the smoke-room after dinner. It has already been suggested that one factor in making an action good is that it fits the circumstances in which it is done perhaps in some unique moral way that can only be known by intuition. General intuitions can obviously take no account of this unique factor in particular actions.

In spite of these objections it may be the case, as we shall suggest in the next chapter, that certain types of actions are opposed to what we shall then call the laws of nature and are so far wrong actions, and that every man has, however vaguely, intuitions of these laws of nature. To tell lies may in this way always tend to be wrong, although in some circumstances still stronger obligations may make a course of action involving falsehood the best course possible. Most people, who believe that in present circumstances war and capital punishment are morally justifiable, would also admit that war and capital punishment should be abolished as soon as circumstances permit, and this surely implies an insight that in an ideal society they would be bad. When our general intuitions are valid, they are probably not generalizations from particular intuitions, as otherwise they would retain a subjective quality which might lessen their objective validity; and they are probably not generalizations from actions which have been found by experience to have good consequences, because consequences depend so largely on circumstances as to make generalization impossible. They are probably, in so far as they are valid, intuitions of natural relations or natural laws, but with these we shall deal later. The critic of general intuitions is certainly right in holding that the ordinary man apprehends these laws vaguely, and expresses them inaccurately.

§6. *Universal Intuitions*

The view that ethical principles are reached by intuition is not an ethical theory of the moral standard, but a philosophical theory as to how we reach universal truths. In universal intuitions what we know intuitively is not the rightness

or wrongness of particular actions or of classes of actions, but some rule or principle which may assist us directly or indirectly in discovering whether an action is right or wrong. It has been a common, if over-simplified, view to hold that there are two theories of knowledge, an inductive theory that we begin with the observation of particular facts and on the basis of these proceed to make generalizations in the form of universal statements, and a deductive theory that we begin our knowledge with abstract universal principles known intuitively from which our more particular knowledge is inferred. Few would deny that observation with the help of our sense-organs plays some part in the acquisition of knowledge; what is generally in debate is whether anything more than observation and generalization is required. For example, from our frequently repeated observations of men dying and the complete absence of contradictory observations we conclude that all men are mortal. It may be that by this purely empirical or inductive method we can reach statements of the type used in the descriptive sciences such as 'All bodies heavier than air tend to fall to the ground', although many philosophers would hold that even here something more than mere observation is involved. By mere observation however we can never reach statements which imply the ideas of necessity or obligatoriness, for example the ethical statements 'Virtue *must* result in happiness', or 'Virtue *ought* to result in happiness'. The whole-hearted empiricist would conclude that we never can make validly a universal statement with 'must' or 'ought' in its predicate. So if we are to maintain that ethics is a normative science providing universal rules as to what ought to be done, we must reject the purely empirical theory of knowledge. The other alternative is to make ethics into a descriptive or positive science.

The deductive theory in its commonest form holds that all our knowledge depends on abstract principles that are known by intuition; the widest of these principles is the law of contradiction in logic. If we are to retain ethics as a normative science, a theory of ethics must involve the intuitive knowledge of certain truths. Even a theory opposed to most forms of intuitions like hedonism must begin with an intuition that pleasure ought to be pursued or that only actions which

cause pleasure can be right; there seems to be no other way than intuition of discovering the central principle of hedonism or any other ethical theory, for it is a principle that we must *see* to be self-evidently true. Yet, here as elsewhere, there is nothing infallible about intuition. In logic and mathematics, abstract principles known intuitively are only justified or confirmed as valid by their power of making our experience intelligible. It is as we apply the law of contradiction to experience that we are confirmed in our belief in the impossibility of two contradictory statements being true. In the same way the intuition of a moral principle, for example that happiness is the sole good, can only be held to be valid when it has come through the test of our moral experience. If it explains the facts of the moral life and if it is not contradicted in any way by other principles which appear to be necessary implications of morality, then and only then can it be accepted as a valid principle. It may be the case that a man cannot help believing in what he sees intuitively to be true, but for his intuition to be accepted by ethical science it must be tested both by its compatibility with other intuitions, and especially the particular intuitions mentioned in an earlier section, and by its ability to give a consistent explanation of moral experience. So long as men generally regard other things than happiness as good, and so long as there are ranges of moral experience that cannot be explained by the hypothesis that men ought always to seek happiness, the intuition that happiness is the sole good cannot be accepted as valid.

§7. *Conclusion*

What services does intuition render to ethics? Much that appears to be intuition is simply an automatic reaction that is the result of moral experience. Just as the practised workman makes a movement at his trade without deliberation, so the practised moral agent sees directly the right thing to do or the right rule to follow in a particular case. There appear to be, however, certain forms of intuition where it is to some degree independent of reasoning and experience. (i) In the case of particular actions the quality which we have called 'moral fittingness' to the particular circumstances seems to be known intuitively and not directly analysable into any

relation discoverable by reason. (ii) In the case of classes of action, we seem to know intuitively that certain types of action are or are not in accordance with what we have called the 'laws of nature'. (iii) Certain ethical notions, and in particular the notion of 'ought'-ness or obligatoriness, cannot be discovered by mere outside observation. The notion of 'ought'-ness must be in some way or other intuitively apprehended, although it may only become explicit to our minds through experience, and must be consistently applied to experience. This would apply to all ethical notions and principles which appear to be known intuitively.

Chapter VIII

THE STANDARD AS LAW

§1. *The Meaning of Law*

In ordinary life we are familiar with two kinds of laws, the laws of our country and the laws of nature. The former may be called *political laws*; they are orders made by a sovereign government to all its subjects or to all of a certain class of its subjects. The subjects may disobey these laws but, if they do so, they render themselves liable to be punished. If there is no punishment for the breaking of a law, the law very soon loses all its authority over those who do not willingly observe it. Political laws differ from country to country and from time to time. New circumstances bring new laws; in time of war, for example, we find new laws dealing with national registration, rationing, and the power to commandeer property. Some, but not all, political laws deal with matters concerning morality; murder, for example, is forbidden both by the political laws of most countries and by moral precepts. The laws of nature, which may also be called *scientific laws*, are simply universal statements of fact, stating relations that hold universally between events in the real world as, for example, the law of gravitation, which states that every body attracts every other body with a certain force. There is a tendency to think that universal statements which express the relation of cause and effect are laws of the most scientific kind, but we shall argue in a later section that it seems hardly right to think that there are no other universal relations than relations of cause and effect, and that the term 'law of nature' would be equally appropriate in the case of other universal relations. Scientific laws differ from political laws in being statements of fact and not commands, so that while it is possible to disobey a political law it is impossible to disobey a scientific law, if it be really valid, even in the figurative

sense of producing an exception to it. Scientific laws, if valid, cannot be changed, although of course they may have different applications in different conditions; political laws as we have already seen vary from time to time. Scientific laws resemble political laws in having a universal reference; in the case of a political law, *all* of a certain group or class must obey the law; in the case of a scientific law, a statement is made about *all* the objects or events of a certain kind. The name 'law' was given to the laws of nature in all probability because it was thought that these, too, were commands of God the creator, or the orders that He had given for the construction of the universe.

In both political and scientific laws there may be a difference in the range of the application of the law. Some political laws, for example the laws dealing with murder, apply to all the citizens of a country indiscriminately; others, for example the laws dealing with income-tax, apply only to a limited group of people, in our example those with an annual income above a certain amount. Similarly, some scientific laws, like the law of gravitation, appear to be absolutely universal in their application and there is a tendency to limit the term 'laws of nature' to such absolutely universal laws. Other scientific laws hold only under certain conditions; for example the law of Malthus that population tends to exceed the means of subsistence held in the conditions prevailing in Europe in the early nineteenth century and in the conditions prevailing in India and China to-day, but it does not hold in the conditions prevailing in Western Europe or North America to-day. So in the case of scientific laws we may distinguish between universal laws or laws of nature holding unconditionally, and *hypothetical* scientific laws holding under certain conditions.

The German philosopher Kant used the name 'hypothetical imperative'[1] for something which appears to be another kind of law, and which has more of the nature of a command or political law than a statement of fact. The builder, if he wishes to erect a permanent building, has to obey certain rules. These rules are dictated partly by the

[1] Kant: *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Second Section (Abbott, p. 31).

nature of the materials he is using, for they will differ in a brick and in a stone building, and partly by the object at which he is aiming, for they will differ when the builder is building a cathedral to last for centuries and when he is building a temporary shelter. Hypothetical laws of this kind appear to resemble political laws in the fact that they can be disobeyed, but, if the agent disobeys them, he will not attain satisfactorily the object at which he is aiming. And, as we have seen, such hypothetical laws require to take into account the facts of nature; the laws of building need to take into account the nature of the material being used. Indeed, the really 'hypothetical' part of such a law is really a scientific law of a limited kind; it is a statement of the means that will always bring about a certain end, or the cause that will always produce a certain effect. The laws of building or architecture, for example, are statements of the causes that will always produce certain effects in building. What gives them the appearance of commands or political laws is the fact that somebody, the builder himself or a customer, has, by a wish or a command, ordered the erection of the building. At the most, the laws of architecture are what Laird called 'subordinate imperatives', or commands which are not commanded in their own right, but only derivatively because something else is commanded. If a builder accepts the obligation to build a house, he accepts the obligations which follow from it including the obligation to obey the laws of architecture.

In the science of economics we find examples of the three kinds of law which we have so far mentioned. Economics contains scientific laws, mostly of the hypothetical kind, which hold only under certain conditions, e.g. the law of supply and demand, that the price of a commodity tends to rise with an increase in demand or a decrease in supply. Economics is concerned with political laws, such as regulations made by a government controlling prices and rents. It also is concerned largely with what Kant called 'hypothetical laws' and Laird called 'subordinate imperatives';[1] it provides rules, for example, as to what people should do if they wish to increase the national wealth.

[1] Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 42.

Some writers refer to these hypothetical imperatives as normative laws, but others confine the term 'normative law' to rules which hold universally for all men, not merely for builders or money-makers or any other limited group of people. We may call these 'dominant imperatives' to which the 'subordinate imperatives' are instrumental. Some people hold that there are no such imperatives; we simply have our own desires or the orders of other people including governments, and we have to obey the 'subordinate imperatives' in so far as we desire the objects to which they are instrumental or in so far as we are compelled to obey the commands of others, and these subordinate imperatives are involved in our doing so. The most likely cases of rules holding unconditionally and universally or, as Kant called them, categorical imperatives, are the rules provided by ethics and by religion, and these have the best claim to be called normative laws. Some people have tried to put the rules of aesthetics and the rules of logic on the same level as the rules of ethics and of religion. It is doubtful whether there is a universal obligation to seek to create or even to enjoy the beautiful; and, if there is, it is almost certainly a moral obligation to be justified on ethical and not on aesthetic grounds. Similarly it appears that obedience to the laws of logic is not obligatory for a writer of a fairy tale or a comic opera, whose aim is the entertainment of others and not truth. If there is an obligation of some kind on everyone to discover and know the truth it is certainly a moral obligation. The case of the laws of religion is more difficult; they appear to be more definitely regarded as political laws or commands than the laws of morality, for they are explicitly held to be the commands of God.

Kant distinguished three kinds of normative laws which he called imperatives or commands.[1] (i) There is, as we have already seen, the *hypothetical imperative*, which only holds for groups of people who, under certain conditions, have certain ends in view, as, for example, the laws of architecture. (ii) There is the *assertorial imperative*. There are certain ends about which we can *assert* that everybody seeks them, so that the hypothetical rules for attaining such ends would be

[1] Kant: *Fundamental Principles of Metaphysics of Morals*, Section II (Abbott's translation, pp. 31–33).

universally applicable, but would still be conditional, because they only hold because of the condition that people seek these ends. Kant held that we can assert that all men naturally seek happiness, so all rules which are to be observed in order to attain happiness are assertorial laws. Many people hold that all the laws of morality are laws of this type; for example, hedonists hold that they are rules for attaining pleasure. (iii) There is the *categorical imperative* which holds unconditionally and universally, and Kant considered that the moral law is the only law of this kind. Moral laws do not depend on the ends at which men aim like the laws of architecture or of economics or even the universal assertorial laws of how to reach happiness. In this way Kant denied all teleological theories of ethics, which hold that an action is right because it leads to certain consequences. It is the same truth that is expressed in Kant's statement: 'There is nothing good without qualification except a good will.' All other apparent forms of goodness depend on conditions, and so the rules for attaining them are hypothetical, but the command to will what is good is categorical. Three remarks may be made about this. (a) Kant's term 'categorical *imperative*' implies that the moral law is a command made by somebody. Kant himself, in certain passages, regarded it as a command of God,[1] and it aroused in him the same emotion of religious awe as the sight of the starry heavens aroused in the Psalmist. Kant himself wrote: 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe . . . the starry heavens above and the moral law within.'[2] The term 'imperative' certainly emphasizes the aspect of obligatoriness in the moral law in which it resembles the command of a legally constituted authority. (b) The difficulty of Kant's view is to know how a good will wills or what, in concrete cases, the categorical imperative tells us to do. Most people would accept it as a categorical rule always to will what is good, but this gives us no guidance as to what the decision is in particular acts of willing. (c) It may be doubted whether the moral law or

[1] Kant: *Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason*, II, v (Abbott's translation, p. 226).

[2] Kant: *Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason: Conclusion* (Abbott's translation, p. 260).

any other so-called categorical imperative is absolutely unconditional. The moral law is obligatory only for rational beings, so it is subject to one condition, namely that of being apprehended by a rational mind. Kant himself, as we shall see later, realized this when he said that the moral law must be such that a man can impose it on himself.

§2. *The Moral Law as a Political Law*

Among people who are not philosophically minded one of the most common views of moral laws is that they are commands given by God to men by means of some special revelation like the laws of Moses which were revealed to him on Mount Sinai. This view has been accepted by many moralists, including the English philosopher Paley, who held that in moral obligation the command comes from God.[1] The theist, who believes in God's moral government of the universe, is bound to hold that moral laws are part of God's providential arrangement for mankind, but he may also hold that these laws would still be valid, even if God had not commanded them. In mentioning 'theological naturalism' we have already suggested that when we say that what is right is commanded by God we are not defining 'right', but telling a new fact about it. At the same time it must be admitted with Paley that the hypothesis of a moral law being commanded by God is one of the simplest explanations of that obligatoriness which we have seen to be an essential element in the moral judgement. It is possible that the other elements in the moral judgement like 'value' and 'moral fittingness' may be explainable in other terms, but that the element of 'obligatoriness' comes from the fact that what is right or good is commanded by God. Even if we accept this we have still to discover what makes a right action right and so worthy of being commanded by God.

At the level of customary morality when the tribe has a complete all-round, or what we would now call a 'totalitarian', influence on the individual, it is easy to identify the moral law with the law of the tribe. It is the command of the chief or of the elders or, at a more advanced stage, of the duly constituted government. This view, however, cannot be

[1] Paley: *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, Bk. II, Ch. 2.

held when conscience tells an individual that he is not to obey the law of his country, and the 'conscientious objector' by his act denies this view of morality. To regard political law as more binding morally than the voice of conscience is altogether opposed to the common-sense view of the matter. The fact that political codes vary from country to country, and in the same country from time to time, separates them from the moral law which has been generally considered to be absolute and unchanging. Some legislators have indeed thought that their special task is to apply the universal moral law to the particular conditions of their country in their legal code.

There are certain difficulties of the whole conception of the standard as law brought out most clearly in the limitations of political laws. (a) While political laws, and universal commands generally, can deal with moral matters in a negative way, as in forbidding murder or theft, they are often incapable of dealing with positive moral duties, like the duties of benevolence, which depend so much on the individual's position and circumstances. (b) While political laws, and laws generally, can command or forbid external actions, they can do little or nothing to ensure that the action is done or refrained from in the right spirit, and the 'right spirit' is very important for morality at the level of conscience. (c) Political laws, and laws generally, cannot enjoin actions which are unique in their moral quality. The heroism of the brave man and the self-sacrifice of the saint are things that cannot be commanded by law. These limitations, which are so conspicuous in the case of political law, would apply to every form of moral standard, which takes the form that all people or all people of a certain group ought to do a certain thing, and this is just what we mean by the standard as law.

§3. *The Moral Law as a Law of Nature*

When we talk of the 'nature' of a person or thing we may mean any one of three things. (i) We may mean the primitive or original nature, referring to those characteristics the person or thing had in some earlier period of history when it was first called by its present name. It is in this sense that Rousseau and other moralists advocated a return to

nature or to the simpler form of life that our ancestors are supposed to have lived. There are few or no grounds in history for holding that primitive ways of living were morally superior to those in vogue at the present day. In any case it is certainly not the fact of their being primitive that makes them morally superior. (ii) We may mean by the nature of a person or thing what it actually is at the present time. When we say that it is the nature of a dog to 'bark and bite' we are merely asserting in other words that most dogs do normally bark and bite. If this be the meaning of 'nature', it would be absurd to say that it is anyone's duty to 'live according to nature'; it would merely amount to telling him to do what he is doing. (iii) By the nature of a thing or a person we may mean its ideal nature. Many people would say that we are now talking of something unreal, something that cannot be handled by the ordinary methods of descriptive science. Yet scientists themselves are constantly describing the ideal nature of things. In the ordinary text-books of zoology a description is given of the characteristics of an animal of a certain species; but the field naturalist knows that the actual specimens which he finds all vary in some way or other from the type described in the text-books. If he were to find, for example, a leopard answering exactly to the description of the leopard in the text-book he would say that this is a perfect leopard or that this is what a leopard should be. The text-book gives to some extent a description not of the actual animals but of the 'ideal nature' of an animal of this kind. Those who regard the moral laws as a law of nature are maintaining that the rules of morality are rules by obeying which man would attain his ideal nature and ideal natural relations between himself and others. It is in this third sense that the concept of 'nature' is relevant for ethics.

Some of the Greek sophists held that morality was a mere convention established for human convenience, and the Epicureans took the view that justice is only a name for an arrangement devised by men for the purpose of securing their own happiness. The school of Socrates, however, regarded morality as natural, somewhat in the third sense of the last paragraph, and the Stoics held explicitly that the

virtuous life is the life 'according to nature', nature being governed by one universal law which is fundamentally rational. Cicero expressed the Stoic view in its developed form in the following passages: 'True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its demands and averts from wrong-doing by its prohibitions.' 'We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it.'[1] 'The law is not one thing at Rome, another at Athens, but is eternal and immutable, the expression of the command and sovereignty of God.'[2] Some of the Stoic writers spoke as if this life had been actually lived by man in primitive days (or as if ideal nature were identical with primitive nature), but others of the Stoics saw the difference between the primitive life, which at its best is a life of innocence due to ignorance, and the Stoic life according to nature, which is a life lived in full consciousness of what is rational and consequently right.

The view of the moral law as a law of nature was adopted somewhat hesitatingly by Christian thinkers who regarded goodness as a matter of supernatural grace rather than of natural law, but the law of nature had a fundamental place in the system of the greatest of medieval philosophers, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Aquinas taught that natural law is ordained by God, and that it is concerned with the social life of man as a creature of time and space living in the actual world where all his social relations are to be ordered according to the law of God. Natural law is a judgement touching what is right, a judgement necessarily flowing from the Divine being, and unalterably determined by the nature of things as they exist in God.[3] God's eternal law is the command of His divine reason, and so far as the knowledge of this law can be shared by human reason, it is what we call natural law. Other animals may share in God's eternal law in so far as they follow it instinctively, but man shares in it by way of knowing it, and it is this eternal law, in so far as

[1] Cicero: *Republic*, iii. 22.

[2] Cicero: from *Lactantius Divinarum Instutionum*, vi. 8.

[3] Gierke. Tr. Maitland: *Theories of the Middle Ages*, p. 172.

we know it, that we call the law of nature.[1] Because of the limitations of our knowledge of the eternal law, human law (which we have called political law) is needed to teach us our particular duties, but our human codes of law must never be opposed in any way to the law of nature which is part of the eternal law of God. A modern theist might say that God constructed the physical universe on principles which are imperfectly known to the scientists as scientific laws or laws of nature; similarly, Aquinas held that God made man and man's social relationships on certain rational principles, which, in so far as we know them, we call the laws of nature.

Among English thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Cambridge Platonists held that the laws of morality are part of the fundamental structure of reality, but the clearest and most suggestive statement of the 'law of nature' in English ethics is that of Samuel Clarke (1675–1729).[2] Clarke regarded the universe as constituted by moral relations analogous to the causal relations of the physical universe. There are necessary and eternal relations, both causal and moral, which different things bear to one another, and there follow from these relations the 'fitness and unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another'. Accordingly, natural fitnesses are expressed in Clarke's four principles of piety to God, of equity and of benevolence towards one's fellow-men, and of sobriety in what concerns the self. These are the natural laws of human relationships. In Clarke's own words 'there is a fitness or suitableness of certain circumstances and an unsuitableness of others, founded in the nature of things and in the qualifications of persons, antecedent to all positive appointment whatsoever'. All men agree in their judgements of such fitness and unsuitableness as they agree concerning the brightness of the sun or the whiteness of snow and, so far as people are reasonable, they guide their conduct by these relations of things. Natural uncorrupted man would always do so, but our irrational impulses lead us into error. Clarke might have held, for example, that the relation of obedience

[1] Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*, II. I. 91. 1, 2.

[2] S. Clarke: *Discourse upon Natural Religion.*

between children and their parents is a necessary and eternal relation, and we would all admit that there would be something 'unnatural' in a moral law which enjoined parents to obey their children. Again, there is a natural fitness in answering a question with the true answer; to lie without reason would be in some sense unnatural. When a modern Utilitarian says that not even extra-marital intercourse is immoral, if no unhappiness will be caused thereby,[1] he is making a statement that is repugnant to the common sense of most people. The ground of this repugnance is surely that extra-marital intercourse is unnatural or unfitting in our human social relationships.

One fundamental view which is maintained by the theory of the moral standard as a law of nature is that morality is objective. It may be admitted as we have already seen, that different civilizations and different ages have had slightly different moralities, but they have never had entirely different moralities. Mr. C. S. Lewis puts it in this way in his *Broadcast Talks*: 'Think of a country where people were *admired* for running away in battle, or where a man felt *proud* of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five. Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was your own family or your fellow-citizen or everyone. But they have always agreed that you oughtn't to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired. Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you mustn't simply have any woman you liked.'[2] The objective nature of morality is proved a little more scientifically by the fact that we can and do compare differing codes of morality as better or worse. To quote Mr. C. S. Lewis again: 'If no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other, there would be no sense in preferring civilized morality to savage morality, or Christian morality to Nazi morality';[3] there would be indeed no sense in supposing that such a thing as moral progress is possible. We may take it

[1] Stace: *Concept of Morals*, p. 188ff.

[2] C. S. Lewis: *Broadcast Talks*, p. 11.

[3] C. S. Lewis: op. cit., p. 17.

that there is an absolute universal law, however inadequately it is known by us, underlying our moral judgements; the medieval moralists who laid emphasis on the law of nature were very definite that this law is only a limited if valid expression of the law of God, in so far as that can be known to our human minds.

The moral law, however, is not a law of nature in exactly the same sense in which the law of gravitation is a law of nature. A moral law says not that things are always done, but that they always ought to be done. It distinguishes between certain natural tendencies (which may in themselves be described in terms of scientific law) as good, and other equally natural tendencies as bad. There is, however, a fact that links scientific law and moral law. The view of the moral standard as the law of nature points out that moral laws take scientific laws into account, that to some extent they are based on scientific laws. It is because of the natural dependence of the child on its parents, about which a scientific generalization can be made, that it is morally fitting that children should obey their parents. The scientific fact that the number of males and the number of females of the human species are approximately the same under natural conditions is a fact that can be used as a basis for an argument in favour of monogamy. We are not merely stating that moral standards must take into account the facts of nature in their applications; this is true and often accounts for the different forms that moral rules take in different countries and in different ages. We are also maintaining that the absolute moral standards themselves are bound up with universal truths about human nature and its common relationships everywhere; in other words they are bound up with what modern science calls the laws of nature, and particularly the laws of human nature. It may be something universal in nature that enables moral laws to have that universality which entitles them to be termed laws.

Yet this is not the whole story of the moral laws as laws of nature. The moral fittingness of the conduct which is enjoined by the moral laws is a relation of a unique kind which, we suggested in our last chapter, can be apprehended only by an intuition. Professor C. D. Broad says that fittingness

or unfittingness is a direct ethical relation between an action or emotion and the total course of events in which it takes place.[1] Moral fittingness need not be the only way in which an action can be good or right, but it is a way that can be explained in terms of a natural relation, a relation that can be generalized as a law of nature, not of course a scientific law stating a relation of causation, but an ethical law stating a relation of moral fittingness. Attempts have been made to explain this relation of fittingness in terms of other relations. Evolutionists have maintained that good conduct is conduct by which a man adapts or fits himself to his environment, and so secures a longer term of life either for himself or for his species, but, as we shall see in a later chapter, most people would deny that such conduct is necessarily good in a moral way. If it be morally good, that is merely an additional fact about it. Again, good conduct may be as we have suggested in the preceding chapter fitting in the sense of being aesthetically beautiful, but we had reason there to hold that moral fittingness is not identical with aesthetic fittingness. If there are relations of moral fittingness in the universe they are relations of a unique kind, and, in order to maintain their reality, we shall need a metaphysical theory of the universe other than the mechanical one which holds that everything can be explained by the law of causation and the uniformity of nature, or in other words that the only laws of nature are scientific laws stating causal relations. It will need to be a more spiritual theory of the universe more like the theory of Plato which held that the central fact about the universe is its goodness. We shall make fuller suggestions for such a theory in our concluding chapter, and shall again there refer to what is regarded in this book as the most adequate theory of ethics, namely, that the moral law is a law of nature.

On one point most upholders of the moral standard as a law of nature have been agreed. From the Stoics down to Clarke, they have held that the law of nature has been known by reason, and that the life according to nature is also the life according to reason. Some have held explicitly that it is the fact of the moral law of nature being reasonable that makes it worthy of our obedience. In other words, the moral

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 219.

law is not a scientific law like the law of gravitation, but a logical law like the law of contradiction. It is this view in varying forms that we shall deal with in the remaining part of this chapter.

§4. *The Moral Law as a Law of Reason*

The view that the moral standard is a law of reason is often a reaction from the view that morality depends on the feelings of the maker of the moral judgement. If morality depends not on feeling but on reason, then its standards are objective and unchanging. We have seen too that the view that the moral law is a law of nature has often been held along with the view that nature is fundamentally rational. One form of this theory is that good actions are in some sense consistent actions. This view was expressed in an extreme form by Wollaston, a follower of Clarke.[1] Wollaston held that a bad action is a practical denial of the true state of affairs and that a good action is a practical affirmation of it. 'If a man steals a horse and rides away upon him,' he does not 'consider him as being what he is' (that is, another man's horse), and 'to deny things as they are is the transgression of the great law of our nature, the law of reason.'[2] All wrong-doing consists in affirming a falsehood. As Leslie Stephen put it: 'Why a man should abstain from breaking his wife's head was that it was a way of denying that she was his wife.'[3] Mackenzie pointed out that it is true that a bad act is inconsistent; but it is inconsistent not with objective fact, as Wollaston said, but with an ideal.[4] Stealing is bad not because it asserts that another man's property is my own, but because it is inconsistent with an ideal relation between myself and my neighbour.

In the next section we shall see another form of wrongness being regarded as inconsistency. Kant argued that when a man does a bad action he is acting inconsistently in the sense that he himself is acting on a principle which he is not

[1] Wollaston: *The Religion of Nature*, Sections I–VI.

[2] Wollaston, quoted by Sorley: *History of English Philosophy*, p. 158.

[3] Stephen: *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 130.

[4] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 3, Pt. II, §11.

prepared to let others adopt as their principle, and it is in this inconsistency that the badness of the action lies.

Professor H. J. Paton, in his book on *The Good Will*, has laid emphasis on coherence in willing. In the lower forms of goodness, the actions of an individual form a coherent whole among themselves; in higher forms of goodness they form a coherent system with the actions of the other members of one's own society, and in the highest forms of goodness they form a coherent system with all other acts of willing in the universe. There are two aspects of Professor Paton's theory, namely, that goodness is a characteristic of acts of willing and only belongs to other things in so far as they are objects of such acts, and that the goodness of such acts of willing depends in some measure on their coherence among themselves. Professor Paton has not made it clear whether there is a goodness in willing as such apart from its coherence. The distinctively moral good at any rate is to be found in the will which is not only coherent in itself but is also coherent with similarly coherent wills in the society of which the agent is a member. It is doubtful, however, whether coherence, taken by itself apart from the volitions which cohere, is of much moral value; for an act of willing to be good it is necessary that the action which is willed should itself be good as well as that it should cohere with other acts of willing. The coherence in the policy of a group of anarchists apparently increases the evil of their policy. It is only when a policy is made up of volitions which are either good in themselves or good in some smaller combinations that coherence adds to the goodness of the policy. The goodness of a volition does not depend altogether on its coherence with other acts of willing; it depends largely on its own particular content. Coherence of action or volition is, of course, not identical with logical consistency, although idealists are in danger of making this confusion in ethics. Two actions are normally said to be coherent when the performance of the one facilitates or at least does not hinder the performance of the other, and the degree of coherence is the degree to which the two actions mutually facilitate one another. We may say also that two actions are coherent when they do not imply that the agent is making contradictory judgements of fact or acting on

contradictory principles of action, and in this meaning coherence has a connexion with logical consistency. One condition of an action being right or morally good is that it should cohere with the agent's other actions and the actions of other good people in both these senses of coherence, but there are other necessary conditions to be fulfilled before we can call an action good.

The reason for this condition is the old one given for obeying the law of nature, namely that the universe is fundamentally rational, so that in order to 'live according to nature' we too should act in a rational way.

§5. *The Theory of Kant*[1]

Kant's first principle is that 'there is nothing in the world or even out of it that can be called good without qualification except a good will'. Kant illustrates this principle in two ways.[2] (i) He points out that the 'gifts of fortune', talents and worldly wisdom are good only on condition that they are used by a good will. They are not good if they exist quite alone; and when wealth or intelligence is used by a bad will, the evil of the whole situation is increased and not lessened. It is a fact that we ordinarily speak of wealth and intelligence as good things, but, according to Kant, this is not the case unless they are being used by a good will. (It is possible that when we call them good we are using the word 'good' in some other meaning than the ethical one.) Of course, wealth and intelligence, as used by a good will, are good. Professor C. D. Broad holds that what Kant's examples prove is that things which are intrinsically good (that is, good even if they exist all alone), always contain good will as one element in their make-up.[3] Kant himself maintained that happiness is good when it is the consequence of virtue so that 'virtue-*cum*-happiness' is an intrinsically good whole. Kant's language certainly suggests that the goodness here does not depend on the presence of a good will, but on the fact that the happiness is deserved; yet good will is present in the form

[1] Cf. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (*Kant*). J. W. Scott: *Kant on the Moral Life*.

[2] Kant: *Fundamental Principles of Metaphysics of Morals*, Sect. I (Abbott's translation, p. 9).

[3] C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 117.

of virtue. (ii) Kant's other illustration goes further in maintaining that a good will is itself an intrinsically good whole, for it is good even when it exists quite alone. Kant wrote: 'If with its greatest efforts (the good will) should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not to be sure a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself.'[1] It is not in intrinsic goodness that Kant was interested, for with him the good will might be itself part of the whole or the complete whole. He spoke rather of the good will as being always and unconditionally good, and by unconditionally good he meant good with whatever accompaniments it is found.

The problem for Kant was: 'What is it that makes good will good?' We may take it that Kant certainly meant by willing not a mere passing wish but a definite purpose to action, 'the summoning of all means in our power', as Kant himself put it. One of the commonest explanations of good will is that an act of willing is good when it leads to a good result. Kant, however, saw that the results of willing vary with varying circumstances, and that if he were to make the rule for right willing depend on results it would become hypothetical or, at best, assertorial. For Kant, however, the categorical nature of the moral law was almost a matter of religious faith; to take it away would lessen the absolute authority of the moral law. We should then only be able to say that, only if such and such results are to follow, we should obey the moral law. And if in our explanations of good will there can be no reference to the results of willing, equally there can be no reference to the circumstances in which an act of willing takes place; these too would vary from action to action and so introduce a varying and contingent element into the moral law. It follows from this that the moral law can never give commands about the concrete nature of our actions; for example, to command men to give alms *in certain circumstances* would bring in just those contingent elements which Kant wished to avoid.

Kant held that the characteristic which makes willing right is that it must be done on a rational principle. It is in this

[1] Kant: *Fundamental Principles of Metaphysics of Morals*, Sect. I (Abbott's translation, p. 10).

respect that Kant was an upholder of the view that the moral standard is a law of reason. Man is fundamentally rational and is dealing with a universe that is constructed on rational principles. We may express Kant's view loosely by making a statement which most uncritical people would accept, 'An action cannot be right unless you can give a reason for it.' An action that is done on an impulse, like the impulse of pity, may be right, but the only way of proving it to be right is to show that it is a reasonable action. Kant used language which suggests that an action is right only when it is done from the motive of doing what is reasonable (which, in Kant's view, is obeying the categorical imperative), but this is probably an exaggeration of his fundamental position, and it is certainly not in agreement with our ordinary notions of rightness. We often, for example, judge actions that have been done from an impulse of pity, to be right, provided that reason would also point to these actions as the right ones. At the most, Kant might have reasonably maintained that the action should still be done from a sense of duty even if the particular impulse causing it were absent.

Kant also held that the principle on which the good will wills its actions must not contain any reference to circumstances or results, as otherwise it would bring in just that contingent element which Kant was at such pains to avoid. The right action determined by such a principle would be the same for every individual, no matter what the tastes or inclinations or circumstances of the particular individual are. If we let these things come in, our rule will no longer be purely rational and absolutely categorical. This suggested to Kant the first form that he gives to the categorical imperative, 'Act only on that maxim which thou canst at the same time will to become universal law.' The test of the rightness of an action is whether we are prepared that everybody else should adopt the rule, on which we did the action, as his own rule of action. Professor C. D. Broad has pointed out that Kant's first form is not really a moral law in itself; it is a principle by which moral laws can be tested.[1] The argument appears to be that a rational being will always reject what is logically inconsistent, and Kant held that it is logically inconsistent

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 120.

to adopt a moral principle for ourselves and to refuse to adopt that same principle for other people. The ambiguity in Kant's principle lies in the phrase 'thou canst will'; and it has different meanings in the two examples which Kant himself gave. (i) 'Thou canst will' may mean 'Thou canst will without logical inconsistency'. Kant gave the example of refusing to repay borrowed money: what is true in this case is that the institution of money-lending could not go on if everybody refused to pay his debts. There is, however, an equal degree of inconsistency in such an action as giving charity to the poor; if everybody were to do so, poverty and the consequent need of charity (at least in its present form) would disappear. Yet in common opinion the refusal to pay one's debts is regarded as bad, and the giving of charity is regarded as good. (ii) 'Thou canst will' may however mean 'Thou canst will after having taken the consequences of thy willing into consideration', and this is what Kant illustrated in his other example. If everybody were to neglect the happiness of others, the consequences would be so bad that no one would be prepared to have the neglecting of the happiness of others made a universal rule. Of course, Kant had on his own premises no business to make any reference to consequences, for he held that the moral law is valid without any regard to the consequences of disobeying it. We may agree with Kant that a rule which we are not prepared to let other people adopt for themselves can hardly be a valid moral rule, but the wrongness of such a rule lies rather in the self-centred attitude which puts ourselves on a different plane from other people than in any logical inconsistency in applying the rule.

Kant's theory has been criticized in the following ways:

(a) It has been said that Kant's standard is merely formal, but there is nothing wrong in Kant providing a formal standard. Indeed, that is just what he himself desired to do. Just as the logician provides, for example, the syllogistic form to which every valid argument of that type must conform, so Kant, in his first principle, hoped to provide a rule to which every moral law must conform, and if he had accomplished this, no one can deny that he would have rendered a most valuable service to ethical theory. The question may be

asked whether Kant attempted to deduce particular rules from his abstract principle, and about that his commentators are not agreed. Rashdall, for example, held that he did attempt this,[1] but Seth denied it.[2] If he did so, then he certainly attempted to do something that cannot be done; to do so would be just like attempting to deduce particular concrete arguments in geometry from the abstract form of the syllogism without any other data. What we can maintain is that Kant's principle does take concrete circumstances into account, and that there are concrete cases where the application of Kant's principle would lead to conclusions opposed to established moral opinions. In Kant's first example of refusing to repay borrowed money the contradiction is not purely logical or formal, but depends on the fact that in existing economic and social conditions people would not lend money if there were no hope of repayment. (The Sermon on the Mount envisaged different conditions.) In Kant's second example the contradiction obviously depends on happiness being a concrete consequence of consideration shown to other people. As to the application of his principle, there certainly are cases in which it does apply; for certain rules which forbid certain actions the principle gives guidance in accordance with our usual moral opinions; the thief, tempted to steal, for example, is hardly likely to wish that everybody should be a thief like himself. Even in some prohibitions, however, Kant's principle would not apply. The refusal to repay borrowed money is something that the ordinary debtor may very reasonably wish to be universalized, for by this he would escape from the whole economic system in which he has found himself entangled in difficulties, and the social reformer may agree with him that the abolition of the whole institution of money-lending would be a very good thing indeed. In the case of positive rules enjoining action, Kant's principle may lead to the rejection of conduct that we commonly regard as good; we cannot suppose, for example, that giving to the poor can be universalized, and so we can hardly will it, for by universalizing it no poor would be left. If we make the rule narrower it would mean that the teaching

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I, p. 108.

[2] *Mind*, Vol. XVI, p. 596.

of philosophy is wrong, for no reasonable teacher of philosophy could wish that every other person should become a professional teacher of philosophy like himself. A follower of Kant might reply that we should put our moral rules in a more general form. For example, if a man wills to seek the truth, he should be ready that all other people should also seek the truth. Here too, however, it is surely better that some members of a society should give themselves to other occupations than truth-seeking, for example, creative art. Our conclusion must be that the only positive rule which can be strictly and validly universalized is the rule to do one's duty or to obey the moral law. What is wrong with Kant's principle is not that it is in itself formal, but that it cannot be validly applied.

(b) The objection of formalism may be put in another way. Kant assumed that a good will can exercise itself without taking into account circumstances or consequences at all. We may agree with Kant and the deontologists that there are cases where the act of willing may be good in itself apart from the consequences it causes, although we have suggested that this special deontological form of goodness consists in fittingness to *circumstances*. We may also agree with Kant and the upholders of the law of reason that one condition of a volition being good is that it is consistent with the other acts of volition of the agent or even of other good men in his society, but this is only one condition of goodness, the formal condition as we may call it. For a concrete action to be good it must fulfil other conditions as well, and these Kant ignores. What these other conditions are is the subject of our ethical investigation; we have already suggested that a unique moral fittingness and conformity to the law of nature may be among these conditions. Kant has made an unreal abstraction of one condition essential for a good will, namely the possibility of its rule of action being universalized without contradiction, and even this formal condition does not universally hold at least in the way in which Kant expressed it.

(c) Many have considered Kant's principle to be too rigid, too inflexible, too harsh in its application. It is possible, however, to interpret Kant's principle in two ways. (i) 'Act

only on that maxim which thou canst will to become a universal law *for people in exactly the same circumstances,*' or (ii) 'Act only on that maxim which thou canst will to become a universal law *for people engaged in the same type of action.*' In the case of (i), as exactly the same circumstances are never likely to repeat themselves it is possible for any man to accept Kant's principle and yet to do almost any kind of action. Indeed, to say that his circumstances are unique is the common excuse of the offender against the moral law. 'Anyone would have told a lie if he had been in my circumstances', is the liar's usual defence of his conduct, with the implication that nobody ever has been or will be in the same circumstances. No one can accuse Kant's principle so interpreted of being too strict; it is so lax as to be useless. In the case of (ii), and there can be no denying that this is Kant's meaning, the principle does appear to be too inflexible, for it leaves no room for those doubtful or exceptional cases in which it is right to break the common moral rule. Antigone, in the heroic act of burying her brother, disobeyed the lawful government of the state, an act which nobody would wish to see universalized. The man who tells a lie in order to save the lives of others may not will that lying should become the universal custom, and yet he may be convinced that, in his own special circumstances, to tell a lie was the best possible course of action. We need to take into account other considerations than mere conformity to Kant's principles to decide whether an action is right or wrong.

Kant's principle certainly appears to be too strict in another way; namely, in its appearing to confine morally good actions to those which are done out of respect to the moral law. There are passages in Kant's own writings which suggest that an action done because of the agent's inclination to do it can never be morally good, but it appears to be a truer interpretation of Kant's view to hold that the presence or absence of inclination is morally indifferent. The utmost that Kant could have held necessary is that for an action to be good the agent would still do it from a sense of duty, even if the inclination to do it were not present in his mind. It is good to give alms to those in need from motives of pity and love, provided that we would still do it from a sense of duty on

occasions when these motives were absent from our minds. Kant did not consider that these motives may have themselves an independent moral value as many moralists would now hold.

In this matter, Kant appears to have confused the goodness of an action and the merit of performing it. We commonly hold that there is more merit in an action, or that we deserve more praise for performing it, when we do it in spite of a strong disinclination. There is more merit, for example, in the help given to an enemy, when our natural inclination is to increase rather than to relieve his difficulty, than in the help given to a friend when our natural inclinations all encourage our helping him. When we judge, however, the goodness of the character of the agent, a difference appears. Most people think that it is better for a man to have the kind of character which gladly expresses itself in generous acts of forgiveness than the kind of character which can only do such acts as a matter of very unpleasant duty. And most moralists would hold that in many cases the act which is done out of the fullness of a willing mind is itself a better act, more fitting to the situation and with better consequences, than the act done from a stern sense of duty. We can say that the good man ought to feel inclined to do such an act, and if the inclination is not there the value of the whole act is lessened. It is certainly the case that in doing some right acts a feeling of disinclination ought to be present in the agent's mind. When a judge pronounces a severe sentence it is perhaps morally fitting that he should do his right act with a feeling of disinclination. It certainly does not look as if inclinations were morally irrelevant; for the judgement on the action *as a whole* always includes as a part of its object the 'spirit' in which the action is done, and this 'spirit' certainly includes the agent's inclination or disinclination.

(d) Professor Broad thinks that Kant is wrong in holding that a right action must always be right, no matter what the inclinations of the agent are.[1] It is true that in some cases, as in the judge's pronouncing sentence or in the members of a public board making an appointment, the less that one's own inclinations determine the action the better, and, in these

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 124f.

cases a change in one's personal inclinations would make no difference to the rightness of the action. In choosing a wife, however, inclination is a very important factor, and the man who does so under the guidance of pure reason without considering his own inclinations at all will probably make the wrong choice. Similarly in choosing an occupation a young man is probably always right to take his own inclinations into consideration, for he is not likely to do good work even in the noblest of callings if he himself has no liking for it.

(e) Our chief criticism of Kant's theory is the criticism that we have made of the theory of the law of reason generally. A good action is not merely consistent with other good actions either in Kant's sense of its principle being capable of universalization or in any other sense. Its own particular content must also be good. We have not yet discovered in what this goodness consists, whether in a unique moral fittingness to circumstances or in conformity to a law of nature or in productivity of good results. The mere formal consistency which Kant advocated will never by itself make an action good. We have seen too good reasons for holding that the particular kind of consistency which Kant demanded, namely that the rule of an action should be willed to be the rule of everybody, is not a characteristic of all good actions. There is a unique element about a good action as well as a universal element; it must suit the particular circumstances in which it occurs, as well as obeying a universal law. In this it resembles the activity of the artist who in each work must not only obey the rules of his art but must also be moved by an original creative impulse.

Kant stated two other forms of the categorical imperative, or additional conditions that a valid moral law must fulfil.

(a) 'Treat every rational being including yourself always as an end, and never as a mere means.' Some people have criticized this form by pointing out that we are constantly using other people as means; we use a porter as a means of carrying our luggage, a teacher as a means of educating ourselves and a banker as a means of keeping our money safe. There is only a moral wrong done when we use other people as means in a bad way, as when a woman is used as a prostitute or children are used as cheap means of production. Kant,

however, never stated that we should not use the services of others or that they should not use our services. What he rightly emphasized was that we should never use people as *mere* means, but always should remember that they are ends, things of value in themselves apart from the services that they render us. Kant made this point more explicit when he referred to the aim of the moral life as a kingdom of ends.[1] In this, however, Kant has abandoned the pure deontology which does not take into account the consequences of an action, for in speaking of a kingdom of ends he certainly was regarding those actions as good which in some way or other lead to the welfare of other human beings and ourselves. We shall inquire later in what that welfare consists; Kant seems to have considered that it includes both virtue and happiness. A more valid criticism of Kant's second form of the categorical imperative is that he himself regarded a man not as an end in himself, but as a mere means for the realization of the abstract law.

(b) 'A principle of moral conduct is morally binding on me if and only if I can regard it as a law which I impose on myself.' This form of the categorical imperative prevents us from supposing that the moral law is something imposed upon us from outside in complete opposition to any inclination of our own minds, a view to which some of Kant's statements might lead us. The moral law is surely a law that our own reason makes us inclined to obey, because we find it reasonable to do so. Yet there does seem to be a sense in which the moral law is not self-imposed, for an obligation which is only self-imposed is an obligation from which we can give ourselves a dispensation, and most people, and certainly Kant himself, would hold that the individual has no right to give himself a dispensation from obeying the moral law. Professor Broad has pointed out two cases where we may accept obedience to a moral law as an obligation without finding it reasonable.[2] (i) Its truth may be self-evident to us intuitively, but Kant could have replied that it is reasonable to obey such intuitions. (ii) Again it may be right to obey a moral law not because we ourselves find it reasonable, but because some moral

[1] Kant: *Metaphysic of Morals*, Sect. II (Abbott, p. 46–59).

[2] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 133.

leader, whose judgement we trust, commands us to do so. Kant however could have again replied that it is only because we find it reasonable to obey without question leaders of great moral insight that we find it morally binding to do what they direct. The third form of the categorical imperative simply emphasizes the truth that the moral law is a reasonable law, a law acceptable to our human reason.

While Kant maintained that the good will is the only thing that is absolutely and unconditionally good, that is, good either by itself alone or in every condition in which it is found, he also maintained that in a perfectly good universe a good will would be accompanied by an appropriate degree of happiness.[1] Common sense would agree with Kant that a universe where goodness of willing is accompanied by an appropriate degree of happiness is better than a universe where goodness of willing has no such accompaniment. Yet it is difficult to see how Kant could consistently maintain that the good will is the only thing that is unconditionally good and that yet good will along with happiness is better than good will alone, unless he was using the word 'good' with two different meanings. It is in this connexion that Kant considered it necessary to postulate or assume the existence of God.[2] If virtue ought to be rewarded by happiness we must, according to Kant, be able to say that it can be rewarded by happiness, and when we say that a thing can be, we mean that the necessary conditions for its existence are already present in the universe. Kant thought that the existence of an overruling God is a necessary condition of the universe being so organized as to secure that virtue is accompanied by happiness and so he concluded that God must exist. This is not the only place in his theory at which Kant introduced the notion of happiness as a good. He maintained elsewhere that we ought to aim at our own perfection (that is the attainment of a perfectly good will) and at the happiness of other people.[3] We can heartily agree to the practical

[1] Kant: *Critique of Practical Reason*, Pt. I, Bk. II, Ch. 2 (Abbott's translation, p. 206).

[2] Kant: op. cit., Pt. I, Bk. II, Ch. 2, §v (Abbott, p. 221).

[3] Kant: *Preface to the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*, IV–VI (Abbott, pp. 296–302).

expediency of this rule, for the conditions of life are such that while we are likely to be able to do something to make other people a little more happy, the only person in whom we are likely to effect much moral improvement is our own self. But this double standard of morality is surely a strange one for the philosopher who emphasized consistency and denied the relevancy of pleasant consequences to the rightness of actions. If perfection or the good will is the only good or the highest good for ourselves, it surely must also be the highest good for other people and, however little we can do for other people's perfection, to do that little is far more important morally than to seek their happiness. And if happiness be a good for other people, it surely must also be a good for ourselves. This whole question of why common opinion holds it morally better to seek other people's happiness than to seek our own is one that will need to be considered later.

Kant considered that human immortality is another necessary postulate for morality. If we ought to attain to a perfectly good will, it must be possible to do so. Immortality is a necessary condition of such a possibility, for our human nature is to such a degree sensuous that it will require an infinite time for the will to become rational and so perfectly good. Kant, however, was making too fine a distinction when he distinguished here between an impossibility and a possibility which would take an infinite time to be realized. The ordinary man at any rate sees no difference between the two. The good will is not a will in a state of abstract perfection but the will that wills the best possible in existing conditions, and that we can do here and now. This however brings in again that reference to conditions which Kant wished to avoid. Indeed perhaps the most fundamental objection to Kant's theory is just that he conceived of a good will as willing in a vacuum, whereas actually the good will wills in the light of conditions and consequences.

§6. *Conclusion*

While we have admitted that the moral law may well be commanded by God and derive its obligatoriness from being so divinely ordered, yet we have held that it would be still valid, even if it were not God's command. We have also

seen reason to accept the view that the moral law is in one sense a law of nature, as being objective, universal and depending on the natural constitution of the universe for its validity, but it is certainly not a statement of causal relations like scientific laws. If the moral law is a law of nature, nature must be a system of relations of moral fittingness as well as of causal relations. It is on the ground of the fundamental rationality of nature that we can go on to regard the moral law as a law of reason. In some sense, morality implies a logical consistency in our actions, although we have realized that purely formal consistency is not enough to secure the goodness of our actions. The moral principles on which we act, and the judgements implied in our particular volitions must not only be consistent among themselves, but the concrete actions willed must be themselves good in their own particular circumstances. It is in his failure to realize this and to see that a good volition must be defined in terms of its content as well as its form that Kant's theory fails. The whole view of the standard as law, or of goodness consisting in obeying universally applicable rules has serious limitations. It leaves out the doing of unique acts in particular circumstances, and it suggests a uniformity in good actions, which is not what we find in the richly varied pattern of the moral life at its best. The moral law may keep us from lines of action which are universally bad; it cannot guide us to the full variety of human goodness.

Chapter IX

THE STANDARD AS PLEASURE

§1. *The Nature of Pleasure*

Any mental process may have the quality either of pleasantness or of unpleasantness, but it has always other qualities as well. The sensation that we get from eating sugar is normally pleasant, but the sensation has other qualities as well as pleasantness, such as sweetness; in fact, its pleasantness depends largely on its sweetness. Pleasantness and unpleasantness appear never to occur in the mind alone; they are always parts of more complex concrete mental states. From this an important consequence follows for ethical theory; we can never know by direct introspection that pleasantness by itself is good or valuable. What we can know from introspection is that all states or some states containing pleasantness as an element seem to us directly to be valuable. We might even know that their apparent goodness is in direct proportion to their pleasantness, but this does not appear to be actually the case. Professor Broad points out that malice is a state of mind which is progressively worse according as it is more pleasant to its owner;[1] it is in a man's finding it pleasant to seek the harm of others that malice has its distinctive evil. We call those mental experiences which have the element of pleasantness in such a marked degree that it arouses our special attention by the name of 'pleasures', and it is possible for a man to make such experiences the aim of his actions. Pleasantness seems to occur in the mind under various conditions: (a) as a normal quality of certain sensations and perceptions such as the sensation of sweetness and the perception of beautiful objects; (b) as an accompaniment of any activity either bodily or mental, provided that the

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 234.

activity is not imposed on its agent from outside, or frustrated by the inability to perform it, or impeded by fatigue or some other impeding factor; (even the facing of difficulties as in mountaineering may be pleasant, provided that there is some consciousness of the possibility of the difficulties being overcome); (c) as an accompaniment of the successful completion of any activity; (d) as an accompaniment of the attainment of a desire which is, of course, a special case of the successful completion of an activity, but which is such an important source of pleasantness that it is worth mentioning specially. We have already seen in our discussion of psychological hedonism that our desire for a certain experience may come by association to be a desire for the pleasantness which accompanies that experience. Man's natural desire for food may develop into a desire for the pleasantness which accompanies eating.

§2. *Ethical Hedonism*

Ethical hedonism holds that pleasantness is the only quality because of which an experience is good or valuable. A good action is an action which leads to a pleasant experience as its consequence, and the right action at any moment is the one which will lead to more pleasant experiences or, as we commonly say, to greater pleasure than any other action which is possible for the agent at that particular moment. Ethical hedonism does not merely say that one of the factors which makes an action good is the pleasantness of the experiences which it brings about, for this is a view which many moralists, who are not ethical hedonists, would adopt; ethical hedonism holds strictly that no consequence of an action except pleasantness and unpleasantness, which we may call its hedonic consequences, have the slightest relevance whatever to the goodness of the action.

Ethical hedonism is a theory of ethics telling how men *ought* to act and what men *ought* to desire. In this way it differs from psychological hedonism, which is a theory of psychology holding that men always *do* those actions which have pleasant consequences and *do* have such natures that they can desire nothing but pleasantness. If a psychological hedonist were to go a step further than psychological hedonists

usually do, and maintain that men always do those actions which bring the greatest possible amount of pleasantness to themselves, then there could be no theory of ethics at all for men would always act in a certain way and would be unable to act in any other. As a matter of fact, psychological hedonists do not generally take this step. They hold that man always desires pleasure but not necessarily the greatest possible pleasure: so that while the object of every action is the attainment of a pleasant experience, the pleasantness sought may not be either the most intense or the most lasting pleasantness possible for the agent. In this way they leave room for a theory of ethics that, while men do always seek pleasant experiences, they ought to seek for themselves those forms of pleasant experience which are most intense and most lasting. This theory is called egoistic ethical hedonism, and, if psychological hedonism were true, it would be the only possible theory of ethics. Many ethical hedonists have been at the same time psychological hedonists, and if they had succeeded in demonstrating the truth of their psychological theory, they would certainly have refuted all other ethical theories than egoistic hedonism.

Few hedonists, however, have accepted egoistic hedonism as their sole theory. There are two kinds of ethical hedonism: (a) *egoistic hedonism*, which holds that each man ought to seek his own maximum pleasure ('his own maximum pleasure' being a short way of describing those experiences which will bring to him a greater surplus of pleasantness over unpleasantness than any other experiences possible for him); and (b) *universalistic hedonism*, more commonly known as *utilitarianism*, which holds that each man ought to seek the maximum pleasure of all human beings, or even of all beings capable of experiencing pleasantness and unpleasantness.

In estimating the amount of pleasantness caused by an action, two factors need to be taken into account, the *intensity* or degree of pleasantness caused, and the *duration* or length of time that the pleasant experience lasts. It is difficult to estimate the comparative importance to be given to these two factors. Is an intense pleasantness of a short duration like that enjoyed in eating a sweetmeat to be reckoned greater than a less intense pleasantness of longer duration like that of

lying in bed? Is a shilling spent on a novel that will give us several hours of mildly pleasant reading more productive of pleasure than the shilling spent on a cinema seat where our pleasantness will be more intense while it lasts but over in a couple of hours? Bentham[1] suggested other factors which should be taken into account in comparing two pleasant experiences with regard to their pleasantness, namely (a) *certainty* or the degree of probability of the pleasantness resulting from the action, (b) *propinquity* or the nearness in time of the pleasant result, (c) *fecundity* or the power of the pleasant experience to produce further pleasant experiences in its train, (d) *purity* or freedom from intermixture with unpleasant experiences, and (e) *extent* or the number of persons affected by it. In our practical consideration of the results of an action, the probability of a particular result occurring is a very important factor; Hamlet, for example, argued that it was unwise to take vengeance on his uncle while engaged in prayer because of the 'certainty' of his thus escaping the punishment he deserved.[2] Propinquity is important only in so far as it affects probability; we prefer an immediate pleasure to a more distant pleasure because of the greater probability of our actually attaining it; there is less time for the proverbial 'slip 'twixt the cup and the lip'. Fecundity and purity are really secondary factors determining the intensity and the duration of the pleasant consequences. A pleasure that produces other pleasures has either its intensity or its duration or more probably both increased. Purity means increased intensity for there is less unpleasant experience to reduce the surplus of pleasantness over unpleasantness.

A moralist may adopt ethical hedonism for any one of three reasons. (a) He may hold that the terms 'good' and 'pleasant' have exactly the same connotation or meaning, so that the one may be used for the other indifferently, or more probably he will hold that 'good' has the same meaning as 'productive of pleasant consequences'. (He will be referring of course only to the strictly ethical use of the term 'good'). If this view were correct, it is difficult to understand how

[1] Bentham: *Principles of Morals and Legislation,* Ch. 4, §iv.

[2] *Hamlet,* Act III, Sc. iii, 73–95.

people come to argue as to whether hedonism is a true theory or not, and their discussions are not merely discussions as to the meaning of terms. We may, with Professor Broad, call the holder of this theory an *analytic hedonist.*[1] (b) A moralist may hold that, while the terms 'good' and 'productive of pleasant consequences' are not identical in meaning, the experience of the human race has shown that good actions do, as a matter of fact, produce pleasant consequences. Such a hedonist has still to face the fundamental question of what it is that makes a good action good, or he may take, as such hedonists often do, a sceptical attitude to the possibility of this question being answered. In Professor Broad's terminology, this moralist is an *empirical synthetic hedonist.*[1] (c) A moralist may hold that while 'good' and 'productive of pleasant consequences' are not identical in meaning, yet they stand in a necessary relation to one another. A good action does not merely as a matter of fact produce pleasant consequences; from its very nature it *must* produce pleasant consequences. If we reject analytic hedonism as obviously misrepresenting the nature of ethical argument this becomes the ground of hedonism most worthy of a critical examination. Professor Broad calls it *a priori synthetic hedonism.*[1]

§3. *Egoistic Ethical Hedonism*

This ethical theory holds that what makes an action right is the fact that it causes the greatest possible amount of pleasantness to the doer of the action. Other consequences of the action, such as the fact of its causing pain or unpleasantness to other people are entirely irrelevant to its rightness. It follows that the sole moral duty of man is to try to get the greatest amount of pleasantness for himself throughout his life. The Greek Cyrenaics held that a man ought to seek the pleasure of each moment as it passes without consideration of future consequences, but the Epicureans considered that there should be a prudent consideration of consequences which would enable the agent to secure the greatest possible amount of pleasure in the whole course of his life. In particular, the prudent man will avoid those intense but momentary pleasures, like the pleasures of debauchery, which result

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 90.

in a great deal of disturbance to the pleasant tenor of a calm existence. So much was this aspect of egoistic hedonism emphasized that the Epicureans spoke of the moral end as 'freedom from disturbance' rather than as pleasure. Pleasures which may seem less intense at the moment of enjoyment, like the pleasures of friendship and philosophical study, will keep a man in that calm condition of mind which makes life as a whole really pleasant. A natural accompaniment of this view was the opinion of the Epicureans that justice was not good in itself but merely a compact, expedient for society to make, which prevents men from doing one another harm and so causing one another disturbance and pain. Christianity, with its emphasis on self-sacrifice, did not provide a favourable atmosphere for egoistic hedonism, and the only consistent egoists, since the coming of Christianity, have been rebels from the traditional moral outlook of their age. Hobbes maintained that man was entirely selfish, naturally seeking only his own advantage so that egoistic hedonism is implied in his theory, although Hobbes did not emphasize the pleasantness which results from the carrying out of the egoistic impulses. Sidgwick and other Utilitarians have given some place to egoistic hedonism in a wider utilitarian theory.

We have already maintained that if psychological hedonism were true, egoistic hedonism would be the only possible theory of ethics, and so the strongest argument which an egoistic hedonist could produce would be a demonstration of the truth of psychological hedonism. In our study of the psychology of willing, however, we saw good reason for holding that psychological hedonism is an untrue theory inacceptable to most psychologists, and so the main support of egoistic hedonism has been removed. The most powerful argument against ethical hedonism is the fact that its teachings are directly opposed to our own intuition and the long-established view of morality maintained by the 'common sense' of all mankind. Many people may see directly the rightness of seeking the pleasure of other people. No one in his senses imagines that it is his moral duty to seek his own pleasure. The question whether I should eat a certain dish which is more pleasing to me than another is not really a moral question

at all, unless my choice has other consequences than merely increased pleasure to myself. If this common-sense view needs confirmation, it is surely supplied by the experience of deliberate pleasure-seekers in all ages that the 'pleasures of life' do not give the satisfaction which they promise, and leave those who pursue them with the discovery that 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit'. The mere getting of pleasure for oneself is not satisfying to the natural aspirations of the human mind as a whole. As a matter of history, many hedonists, who have advocated egoistic hedonism, have been at pains to try to show that the conduct which leads to the agent's own greatest pleasure is also the conduct which leads to the greatest pleasure of the whole human race. We shall see later that there is no proof that this is the case, but the very fact that hedonists do attempt to use such an argument suggests that they are not prepared to go against the common-sense judgement of ordinary people that it is better for a man to seek pleasures for others than for himself. Even the least virtuous can remember some one occasion when he did some action because he thought of it as his duty, without thinking it at all likely that it would bring him any pleasure; and one such case shows that egoistic hedonism is not a true theory.

There is one possible argument in favour of some form of egoistic hedonism. There is little doubt that a man is concerned with his own experiences, including their pleasantness, in a way in which he is not concerned with the experiences of others. Accordingly, if we accept the utilitarian end of increasing the total amount of human pleasure, it is conceivable that the best way of doing so is by each individual increasing his own share of human pleasure, although the experience of the pleasure-seeker does not confirm this view. It is probable that this argument gets its plausibility from the fact that a certain amount of attention to a man's own individual interests such as his health and his education, is useful as a means to the service of others and to the increase of their pleasures. It is even true to say that the man who enjoys doing his work for others is likely to do better work than the man who does not. This recognition that a certain amount of enjoyment or pleasant experience for oneself is useful as a means for

attaining some wider moral end is, however, very different from the theory that a man's own pleasure is the only moral end which he ought to seek.

§4. *Utilitarianism*

Some of the eighteenth-century English moralists, including Butler and Shaftesbury, emphasized the naturalness of benevolence or of seeking the good of others and of its place in the moral life, and Hutcheson actually stated that the objective or 'material end' of good conduct is 'the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers', the phrase that came to be the slogan of English utilitarianism.[1] The great leaders of this school at its most flourishing period, the beginning of the nineteenth century, were Bentham, James Mill, and his son, John Stuart Mill. If these moralists had merely argued for a purely hedonistic theory of ethics, maintaining that pleasure is the sole good, their theory might not have met with such general acceptance, but they themselves were social reformers working for the betterment of humanity in ways of which moralists of any school are likely to approve. The very name 'utilitarianism', with its emphasis on utility or usefulness rather than on pleasure, is a case of the 'emotive use of language', prejudicing their readers in favour of their theory; it is more reasonable to be generally useful to others than to aim specifically at the greatest possible pleasantness for all mankind. The utilitarian school had also the advantage of a good slogan, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', a slogan which emphasized the wide distribution of human pleasure as well as its maximization. A purely hedonistic theory would not care whether human pleasure were distributed among many or confined to a few, provided that the greatest possible amount of pleasure were achieved.

In examining utilitarianism we shall consider critically the theories of John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), although Mill was not a strict hedonist, and Sidgwick was not a strict universalist. There has been a tendency to use the name 'utilitarianism' for any teleological theory of ethics, or any theory which holds that actions are not right or wrong

[1] In the modified form 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.'

in themselves but that their moral quality depends on their consequences. Rashdall's 'Ideal Utilitarianism' is an example of this incorrect use of the term.[1] It is certain also that utilitarianism has been made more plausible by its adherents using the term 'happiness' rather than the term 'pleasure', for it is much easier to include under happiness all those ends which men have regarded as morally worth attaining than to include them under the specific psychological quality of pleasantness. In this chapter, at any rate, the theory that is to be examined is that which limits the moral end to the single aim of increasing man's pleasantness.

§5. *The Theory of John Stuart Mill*

Mill's account of utilitarianism may be summarized in the following five statements: (a) Pleasure is the only thing that is desirable. (b) The only proof that a thing is desirable is the fact that people do actually desire it. (c) Each person's own pleasure or happiness (to use Mill's more usual term) is a good to that person, so the general happiness is a good to everybody. (d) Men do desire other objects, but they desire them as a means to pleasure. (e) If one of two pleasures is preferred by those who are competently acquainted with both we are justified in saying that this preferred pleasure is superior in quality to the other. In criticizing Mill's theory, we shall state certain implications of the above propositions and consider whether they are valid or not.

(i) *What is good is what men do actually desire.* This statement of course commits what Dr. Moore calls the 'naturalistic fallacy', in supposing, as it appears to do, that good can be defined in terms of what men desire. Even if it were a fact, as unfortunately it is not, that men do always desire what is good, this is not the fact to which we are drawing attention when we call something good. Even if we were to hold that Mill is not defining 'good' in the sense objected to by Dr. Moore, but merely stating a fact about it, we would still have to admit that Mill has committed in his argument the ordinary verbal fallacy of ambiguity of term. In common English use 'desirable' means what 'ought to be desired', and it is this

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I, pp. 184–221.

common usage which gives plausibility to the above statement of Mill's theory. Mill, however, explicitly uses 'desirable' to mean what people do actually desire as in the proposition (b) in the above paragraph, but the fact that men do actually desire it is no proof of a thing being desirable in the common use of the term. Mill explicitly refers to the analogy of 'desirable' with such words as 'visible' and 'audible'. In these cases it is true that 'visible' means 'able to be seen', so the fact that people do actually see a thing is sufficient proof that it is visible; and it is true that 'audible' means 'able to be heard', so that the fact that people do actually hear a thing is sufficient proof that it is audible. 'Desirable', however, is in the English language not similar to 'visible' or 'audible', but to words like 'detestable' which implies not that a thing is detested but that it *ought* to be detested. This mistake of Mill led him to break the rule that we cannot infer directly from what men actually do what they ought to do; any breach of this rule certainly commits a naturalistic fallacy.

(ii) *Men always desire pleasure.* This indicates that Mill based his ethical hedonism on psychological hedonism; but we have already shown that, if psychological hedonism were true the only possible theory for a moralist would be egoistic hedonism and not utilitarianism. If a man were so made that he could only seek his own pleasure and nothing else, it would be impossible for him to seek the pleasure of other men which utilitarianism maintains that he ought to do. In any case, we have seen that there are good grounds for denying the truth of psychological hedonism; men do not always desire pleasure. Mill admitted somewhat inconsistently that men do seek other things than pleasure, but he holds that men seek such things either as 'parts of pleasure'[1] or as 'means to pleasure'. The expression 'parts of pleasure' is not clear, but Mill presumably meant that we seek those wider experiences like the enjoyment of music because of the element of pleasantness they contain; the pleasantness is one part of the pleasure while the harmony and the timbre of the music are other parts of the pleasure. Mill saw that the object which we seek originally as a means to pleasure may come

[1] Mill: *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 4, p. 56.

by association to be itself the object of our seeking, just as the miser who originally seeks money for the good things that it can buy comes to seek money for itself. This whole argument is a reversing of what modern psychology suggests to be the actual facts of the case; the desire for particular objects comes first, and the desire for the pleasantness derived from them comes later by a kind of association or 'conditioning'. Man naturally desires food when he is hungry; to eat for the sake of pleasure rather than for the sake of satisfying hunger is a later development.

(iii) *Pleasures differ from one another in quality.* Mill held that some pleasures are superior in quality to others and in this he had the support of common opinion. The pleasure of listening to good music is generally held to be superior in quality to the pleasure of eating; the pleasures of benevolence are held to be superior in quality to those of self-indulgence, even although their actual intensity may be less. Most moralists explain this by holding that the superior pleasure contains other elements of value as well as its pleasantness, but the strict hedonist is debarred from this view for he holds that no other element than pleasantness can have any value, so that the only factor which can make one pleasure superior to another is its pleasantness. If listening to music is a superior pleasure to eating food, the hedonist can hold it to be so only because it has a greater intensity or duration of pleasantness. This view is not confirmed by common experience. Certain pleasures, like sexual intercourse or the excitement of a crowd at a football match, are extremely intense, but they are not on that account regarded as among the highest forms of pleasure.

It may however be the case that we use the word pleasantness loosely for mental states that are not exactly the same, and that certain of these states are superior in quality to others. According to this view the element of pleasantness in listening to music may be different in kind from the element of pleasantness in eating. In English we do use different words when drawing attention to the pleasantness or hedonic quality of different mental states. We tend to use the word 'pleasures' for the more sensuous forms of enjoyment, particularly those due to the gratification of the bodily appetites

or to the presentation to the senses of beautiful objects like pictures and music. We tend to use the word 'happiness' when drawing attention to the pleasantness of more permanent and durable kinds of enjoyment, which depend more largely on conditions within man's own nature, as when we speak of the happiness of a man in his home or in his profession. Indeed, it is just one of the debated points of teleological ethics whether the virtues are merely means to produce pleasure or whether they are constituent elements of the state which we call happiness, for we apparently think of the happy man as virtuous in a way that the successful pleasure-seeker is not. There are pleasant experiences for which even 'happiness' seems an inadequate word; the joy of an artist in his creative work or the blessedness of communion with God are generally regarded as such experiences, and we have used the words 'joy' and 'blessedness' rather than the words 'pleasure' or 'happiness'. There are two possible explanations of this terminology and of the apparent differences in the quality of our pleasures. (a) As we have already suggested 'pleasantness' may be an ambiguous term, so that the pleasantness which we experience in the gratification of our appetites is different in kind from the pleasantness that we experience in the fellowship of our friends or from the pleasantness that the artist experiences in the pursuit of his creative art. In this case when the hedonist says that only pleasure is good he really means that only the superior kinds of pleasure are good. No hedonist can accept this position for he holds (and holds reasonably) that the lower pleasures are also good, although perhaps in a less degree. The element of value in both is just that on account of which we call them both pleasant. (b) The more reasonable explanation is that while pleasantness is present in every experience which we call good, it is not the only element of value in such an experience. This view is the more probable, because as we have already seen, pleasantness is always an abstraction. What we actually experience is a concrete mental state of which pleasantness is only one element discovered by analysis. It is not even true to say that the value of the whole mental state can be measured by the amount of pleasantness that it contains, for we have already seen that malice becomes more evil in proportion as

it is more intensely pleasant. It is surely a reasonable inference that elements other than pleasantness contribute to the goodness of the superior 'pleasures' like the enjoyment of art or communion with God. The facts certainly seem to justify Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures, but it is a distinction that cannot be made by the strict hedonist, for it does imply that there are other elements of value in a good whole besides pleasantness or conduciveness to pleasantness.

(iv) *Pleasures can be added to one another.* Mill certainly committed the logical fallacy of composition as he passed from egoistic hedonism to utilitarianism. To infer from the statement that each person's happiness is a good to each particular person, the conclusion that the general happiness is a good to the whole number of persons is no more a valid argument than to suppose that because each man in a city has the right to open the door of his own house it follows that all in the city have the right of opening the door of any house they may fancy. It is the desirability of Mill's conclusion which gives his argument a plausibility which is lacking in that of the house-breaker. There are, however, other ways of reconciling egoistic hedonism and utilitarianism. It may be argued that a man's devoting himself to the pursuit of the general happiness is the best means of attaining happiness for himself, and far-sighted egoists convinced by this argument would set themselves to seek the happiness of others. Another possibility of reconciliation depends on the intuitive recognition that another person's happiness is of equal value to one's own. Without such a recognition there would always be a subordination of egoism to utilitarianism or of utilitarianism to egoism. It certainly appears self-evident that another man's happiness is at least an equal good to my own, but the moralist who accepts this is accepting another principle than that of egoistic hedonism, namely, that the location of the pleasure does not matter. It is just on this point that egoistic hedonists and utilitarians differ.

We turn now to the wider question whether there is any way in which the happiness of particular individuals can be added together to form a general happiness, and this raises the whole question as to whether amounts of pleasantness can

be measured and whether they can be added together as Mill's theory assumed. It may be that we have no right to talk of the total amount of pleasantness caused by an action, and still less to compare it with the total amount of pleasantness caused by another action. In this connexion we must distinguish between the theoretical question whether we can aim at a sum of pleasures and the practical question whether we can ever actually calculate the total sum of the pleasant consequences of an action. Our inability to do so will certainly take away from the practical usefulness of such an ethical theory as utilitarianism, but it will not affect the truth or falsity of the theory. The total sum of the pleasant consequences of an action must be taken to include not only the pleasantness immediately resulting from the action but also the amounts of pleasantness in all later states of mind brought about, however indirectly, by the action. It must also be taken to include not only the pleasantness enjoyed by the doer of the action but the amounts of pleasantness enjoyed by all conscious beings in consequence of the action. In calculating this sum of pleasant consequences, it must be assumed that the unpleasant consequences are also taken into account and, in some way, subtracted from the total amount in order to arrive at what has been called 'the total sum of the pleasant consequences of the action'. There is no doubt that we often do compare two simple experiences with regard to the degree of their pleasantness. We say 'An apple is more pleasant to eat than a quince', or 'I enjoyed this novel more than that'. This does not mean however that a quantitative measurement can be made of units of pleasantness in the way that we measure weights or lengths in standard units. The case is more like that of an art critic judging one object to be more beautiful than another, or of an examiner examining students' essays. In these cases it is fairly easy for the critic or the examiner to say that one object or one essay is better than another and so to put them in a serial order; but it is extremely difficult for the critic to say how much the one object is more beautiful than the other, or for the examiner to assign marks. It is a common experience that two examiners will place the essays of candidates in the same order of merit but will give very different marks to the same essay. Yet, if we

were dealing only with the immediate pleasantness of experiences to ourselves we could certainly in many cases say with great confidence that one is more pleasant than another.

The difficulty arises in more complex cases, and particularly when we consider more distant consequences. To begin with, it is difficult, as we have already seen, to compare a pleasure of weak intensity and long duration like that of reading a novel with a pleasure of strong intensity and short duration like that of eating an ice, but there is little doubt that we do sometimes make such comparisons in our ordinary life, generally by confining our attention to the immediate consequences of the two alternatives. Strictly, however, the hedonist has to consider not only the pleasantness of the immediate consequences, but he has to consider the pleasantness of all the resultant experiences, and he has to take unpleasant as well as pleasant consequences into account. One difficulty in his calculation is that when two pleasant experiences come together in our minds the resulting pleasantness sometimes does not seem to be as great as the sum of the two pleasantnesses occurring separately. We consider that the child who gets a large number of toys and sweets on Christmas morning does not get a pleasure equal to the sum of the pleasures that each of the gifts and sweets would have given him separately. There seems to be a limit to the amount of pleasantness that he can enjoy in a limited time, and each additional cause of pleasure seems to give a diminishing pleasantness to the mind very much in the fashion of the law of diminishing returns in economics. The wise parent knows this and, so far as custom permits, arranges the child's receiving of his gifts in such a way that the total amount of pleasantness may be increased. It is also the case that some pleasant experiences seem so to fit into one another that the pleasantness of the two together is actually greater than the sum of the two pleasantnesses enjoyed separately. The British theatregoer seems to think that the pleasure of watching a play and the pleasure of eating chocolates go well together; but on the other hand the pleasure of listening to music and the pleasure of talking with one's friends seem to interfere with one another so that the pleasantness of both of them together appears

to be actually less than that of one of them alone. The next question is as to how far we can subtract the unpleasantness of one or more consequences from the pleasantness of the other consequences of an action. Here too it is difficult to suppose that the subtraction is in accordance with the rules of arithmetic and sometimes it is difficult to see how it can be done at all. The fatigue and the slight ache in the limbs which accompany the mountaineer's triumph as he reaches the summit of a mountain are in themselves unpleasant experiences, but they seem to add to rather than detract from the pleasantness of the total experience. On the other hand, music which might be normally pleasant may appear to add to an excruciating pain. Yet even in such cases where pleasantness and unpleasantness are mixed we do often make estimates of the total balance of pleasantness or unpleasantness. The drunkard when he feels thoroughly bad on the morning after a drinking bout may be able to comfort himself that his evening's pleasure was 'worth it'—that the pleasantness of his drinking exceeded the unpleasantness of the after-effects. While it appears that there is no strictly mathematical way of adding pleasantnesses and subtracting unpleasantnesses from them, a vague statement can often be truly made that the consequences of one action are more pleasant or more unpleasant than the consequences of another.

The situation is even more complicated for the utilitarian than for the egoistic hedonist because the utilitarian has to consider not only the pleasant and unpleasant experiences resulting to one man from an action, but the pleasant and unpleasant experiences resulting to all men. And here there certainly can be no practical way of comparing the pleasantnesses and unpleasantnesses of two men. I can have no knowledge whether my neighbour's toothache feels more unpleasant to him than my toothache does to me. To judge from the way two different people react to the same situation, people seem to vary in their capacities of enjoyment and suffering. So it is only by a limited use of our own experience as a guide to the experiences of others that we can make some very uncertain inferences that one action causes a greater balance of pleasantness over unpleasantness than another.

Yet some such statements are almost certainly true; no one in his senses can doubt that the opening of a hospital in a country devastated by war causes greater pleasantness all round than the opening of a concentration camp.

For a practical estimate of the desirability of one action rather than another according to the utilitarian view, we would need to take into account not only the pleasantness of the consequences of the actions but also the probability of these consequences actually occurring. The figure for comparison would be theoretically the amount of the pleasantness multiplied by the degree of its probability. We have already seen that it is unlikely that amounts of pleasantness can be measured as a number of units, and students of probability tell us that often no numerical value can be given to a probability; we can often say that one event is more probable than another but can make no estimate of the degree of probability of either in a quantitative form.[1] This certainly appears often to be the case in judging the probability of the occurrence of some future pleasure. Even if we had reason to think that the probabilities of two consequences occurring are equal, we would need still to take into account the amount of information on which each judgement of probability is based, for it is always more reasonable to act on a judgement of probability based on full information than on a judgement based on small information.

It is certain that the practical calculation as to which of two courses of action will lead to the greater balance of pleasantness is often impossible from lack of knowledge of these consequences. The argument that we do actually make this calculation in some cases is not sufficient to prove that we can make it in every case. In simple cases we often can make a direct intuitive judgement about consequences, but in these cases there is no difficulty in making a decision. It is in difficult cases that we need to make a calculation of consequences, and in these the complications are often so great that the calculation cannot be made. It is easy for me to judge that my eating sole which has never caused me any

[1] e.g. Keynes: *A Treatise on Probability*, Pt. I, Ch. 3, §xiv.

indigestion in the past is to have more pleasant consequences than my eating lobster which I neither find pleasant to the taste nor easy of digestion. It is extremely difficult to know whether Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon had more or less pleasant consequences than the disbandment of his army could have had, or whether the formation of a federated United States of Europe would have more pleasant consequences at this point of history than the formation of a United Nations Organization. One thing can be said for the utilitarian calculus of hedonic consequences; it is certainly no more complicated and probably less difficult than the practical application of any other ethical theory except a simple form of intuitionism. The application of Kant's categorical imperative in difficult cases would be even more difficult than that of the principle of utilitarianism. There is no easy road to translate ethical theory into rules for practical living.

(v) *The moral end is not merely the maximum amount of happiness but 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.* When the utilitarians used the expression 'the happiness of the greatest number', they certainly introduced a consideration other than those provided by strict hedonism. They maintain that we ought to aim not merely at causing as much pleasantness as possible, but at a certain distribution of this pleasantness. It certainly would appear wrong to common sense to hold that a great amount of pleasure concentrated in two or three people is better than a slightly smaller amount of pleasure distributed universally among mankind, and the utilitarians brought out this point in their reference to the 'greatest number'. For this a principle of distribution is required and, as we shall see later, our intuition tells us that it ought to be a just distribution. Utilitarianism, however, provides no such principle nor does it tell us how far we should be willing to reduce the total amount of pleasantness in the universe in order to secure a more just distribution of pleasantness among mankind.

(vi) *Pleasure is the only thing that is desirable or good.* The fundamental objection to Mill's utilitarianism as to every other form of hedonism is that we know intuitively that other things as well as pleasure are good. What gives a certain

plausibility to hedonism is that every experience which we intuitively recognize to be good seems to provide a certain pleasantness as one of its parts, and it is easy to make the false inference that because pleasantness is present in every good experience, pleasantness is the factor that make the experience good. Professor Stace has pointed out that an increase of pleasantness does not even mean an increase in the more developed hedonic state that we call happiness.[1] This may be due to the fact that, as we have already seen, pleasure-causing stimuli are subject to a law like the law of diminishing returns at least in the happiness they produce. This happiness is dependent not so much on the amount of pleasantness enjoyed as on the kinds of activities in which the owner of that happiness finds pleasure, and this will depend on what we call his character. Sidgwick, on the other hand, maintained that 'when we sit down in a cool hour, we can only justify to ourselves the importance we attach to any of these objects by considering its conduciveness in one way or another to the happiness of sentient beings'.[2] With most men cool reflection is likely to conclude that such experiences as the contemplation of beauty or the system of volitions that constitute a developed moral character, or the knowledge of truth or communion with God or the consciousness of freedom or fellowship with one's friends, would still be good, even if the pleasantness which is their normal accompaniment under present conditions were absent. The matter is, as Sidgwick saw, one for honest introspection, and each man can give only his own verdict. It certainly would seem more in accordance with common opinion to hold that actions leading to perfection of character or to increased fellowship with others are better than actions which merely bring pleasure to their doer. These and other possible objects for a teleological theory of ethics will be considered in our further survey of teleological theories under the headings 'The Standard as Perfection' and 'The Standard as Value'. Some of them seem to have an even better claim than pleasure to be considered as the ends at which right actions aim, and there has been a tendency among teleologists, while retaining the name of

[1] Stace: *Concept of Morals*, p. 146.

[2] Sidgwick: *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. III, Ch. 14.

utilitarianism, to discard strict hedonism, and to recognize other moral standards than that of productivity of pleasure. Rashdall, for example, in his *Ideal Utilitarianism*, combined the utilitarian principle that ethics is teleological with a non-hedonic view of the ethical end.

§6. *The Theory of Sidgwick*[1]

Sidgwick, who was certainly the greatest English utilitarian thinker in the latter part of the nineteenth century, considered in his *Methods of Ethics* three ethical theories, all of which appear to common sense to be reasonable, namely intuitionism, egoistic (ethical) hedonism, and utilitarianism. The type of intuitionism which Sidgwick chiefly examined is what we have called general or dogmatic intuitionism, which holds that we know certain moral rules intuitively. Sidgwick found that the rules so known are just the rules that an enlightened utilitarian would adopt. As long as our intuition gives clear guidance, the type of action enjoined is certainly the one which would cause the greatest happiness to all mankind. When the intuition gives doubtful guidance, as in the case of telling an unpleasant truth to a sick man, then it is also doubtful whether the action is one conducive to the general happiness or not. So Sidgwick regarded the intuitions of common-sense morality as utilitarian rules not deliberately formulated by a utilitarian philosopher, but gradually acquired and modified by the experience of the human race working naturally and more or less unconsciously in a utilitarian direction. Sidgwick realized, however, that in every ethical theory there are intuitions of the kind that we have called universal intuitions. Egoistic hedonism, for example, is based on an intuition that I ought to seek the greatest possible pleasure for myself whatever the other consequences of my actions may be. Sidgwick himself stated certain principles known intuitively by practical reason. One of these is the principle of benevolence that it is our duty to aim at good generally and not at any particular part of it, to regard the good of others, for example, as much as our own. Another

[1] This account of Sidgwick's theory owes much to a well-arranged summary in Broad's *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, pp. 145–161.

is the principle of equity that the good of one individual is not more important than the good of others. While most moralists have accepted some such principles, it is not the case that they are self-evident to all men; they do not appear to be self-evident to psychological hedonists or to believers in a chosen race.

These principles of equity and benevolence seem to imply that the pleasures of others are to be regarded as of equal weight with our own and so might have led Sidgwick to abandon egoistic hedonism in favour of utilitarianism. Sidgwick, however, still retained a place for egoistic hedonism among his 'methods' of ethics. Utilitarianism is based on two sets of premises, the axiomatic truths of egoistic hedonism on the one hand, and the principles of benevolence and equity on the other. In accepting the conclusion of an argument we do not deny the truth of its premises, but rather accept and confirm them. So even if we accept utilitarianism we must still accept the self-evident axiom of egoistic hedonism that I ought to seek the greatest possible amount of pleasantness for myself. This argument would not be valid if we reach the position of utilitarianism by some other way than egoistic hedonism so that on another argument than that of Sidgwick, utilitarianism may be true and egoistic hedonism false, as we have already maintained it to be.

Sidgwick's third 'method' was that of utilitarianism which he had already shown to be strongly supported by the intuitions of common-sense morality. Utilitarianism however may and is indeed likely to provide different rules from those given by egoistic hedonism, and so we are left with two independent moral standards; egoistic hedonism tells us to seek our own pleasure, while utilitarianism tells us to seek the greatest pleasure of the total number of all conscious beings. This was called by Sidgwick the 'dualism of practical reason'. It is possible to suppose that it makes no practical difference whether we aim at our own pleasure or at the pleasure of all mankind. Sidgwick suggested that the practical difficulty might be solved by (a) a psychological reconciliation and (b) a metaphysical reconciliation. (a) A psychological argument on the lines of that of Adam Smith[1]

[1] See Ch. 4, §ii.

might show, that because of the pleasure a man derives from the feeling of sympathy and the practice of benevolence, actions done for the sake of the pleasure of others are always those which cause the greatest possible pleasure to the doer of the actions himself. Introspection shows that this is not always the case. While it is true that in many cases a man finds in his public service his chief source of happiness, there are cases where the path of suffering on behalf of others is chosen in the full consciousness that it is and is always likely to be painful to the chooser. (b) In a metaphysical theory of the universe, we may suppose that there is a controlling being whom we call God, who arranges events so that the individual who works for the pleasure of others will always be rewarded, either in this life or in the next, with the same degree of happiness to himself. Once again, experience suggests that there are cases where in this life at any rate the most devoted servants of their fellow-men suffer much unpleasantness, but of course the upholder of this argument can always point to a future life where virtue will be rewarded. It may be suggested that the existence of God or of some impersonal system for securing the rewarding of virtue like the Buddhist system of karma and rebirths is too large a hypothesis to make in order to reconcile the conflicting demands of egoistic hedonism and utilitarianism in the sphere of practice, unless it has strong confirmation on other grounds. Sidgwick himself did not accept either the psychological or the metaphysical hypothesis; he simply suggested them as ways of escape from the dualism of practical reason. The real difficulty would remain, however, even if these hypotheses were accepted; for the conscientious moralist would still want to know whether he ought to seek as his deliberate aim his own pleasure or the pleasure of all men, although he might realize that practically it made no difference which aim he chose as his own. The real solution appears to be the complete rejection of egoistic hedonism as wholly inconsistent with our common-sense intuitions, so that, if utilitarianism in some form or other is to be accepted it must be on some other ground than that of Sidgwick's premise of egoistic hedonism.

§7. *The End as the Pleasure of Others*

It has been said more than once that common sense gives no moral approval to actions which bring pleasure merely to their doer, but it does give moral approval to actions which bring pleasure to other people, particularly when these are done at the cost of some unpleasantness to the doer of the action. To the ordinary man the giving of pleasure to others simply with a view to one's own indirect enjoyment would certainly have a suggestion of insincerity about it. On the other hand a teleological theory of ethics has, strictly speaking, to admit that the location of the end to be aimed at does not matter, and so it could never justify the distinction made by the ordinary man between other people's pleasure and his own. Yet of all moral intuitions the preferring of the happiness of others to our own seems among the clearest. A mere principle of equity or of justice like that adopted by Sidgwick cannot justify it, for all that such a principle could provide is that another person's pleasure should count equally with our own. What our intuition requires is a ground on which another person's pleasure should be preferred to our own. To put it in another way, does anyone believe that he has the right to cause his neighbour's pleasure to suffer a great diminution in order to secure an equivalent increase for himself? We would rather say that we almost never have the right of causing pain to others, however much pleasure we would gain thereby for ourselves. Professor Stace considers that moral actions are merely one species of the actions which increase human happiness, and that they have the specific characteristics of unselfishness and justice.[1] Morality need not concern itself about bidding us do actions which are pleasant to ourselves; we do them readily enough without any instructor. It may be that justice and unselfishness are required by those 'laws of nature' which are not universal statements of experienced fact like scientific laws. Experience shows us aggression and cruelty in the natural world as well as self-sacrifice and suffering pain for the sake of others. Yet there is something in nature with which the moral law, that it is fitting to suffer for another's

[1] Stace: *Concept of Morals*, Ch. 7.

pleasure, is in harmony. It is analogous with the corn of wheat dying to produce much fruit, with the suffering of the mother in child-bearing, and for the Christian this law has found supreme expression in the death of Christ on the Cross. It is likely that this law can be put in higher terms than those of hedonism, and we shall come back to it later in our consideration of self-sacrifice. Yet even in terms of pleasantness and unpleasantness, there is something fitting or natural about suffering in order that others may have pleasure thereby.

Chapter X

THE STANDARD AS DETERMINED BY EVOLUTION

§1. *The Concept of Evolution*

The word 'evolution' may be used generally for a development of any kind or more particularly for that form of biological development which was taught by Charles Darwin in his *Origin of Species* published in 1859. The notion of development was already a familiar one to philosophers and biologists from the time of Aristotle; indeed, nothing could be more obvious than that in the life of an individual animal or plant there is a development from the embryo or seed to the fully grown animal or plant. Even before the time of Darwin many thinkers held that a development of some similar kind went on in the history of a race of animals or even in the history of the universe as a whole. Darwin's theory of evolution, however, was based on one special kind of development. He denied that the various kinds of animals and plants were each due to a special creative act of God, that God for example in the beginning had created a pair of dogs and a pair of cats. Darwin held rather that each familiar kind of animal or plant had developed from some earlier and not exactly similar kind, the laws of such development being 'natural selection' and the 'survival of the fittest'. To take an imaginary example, in a region of the world in which the ground is covered with snow during the winter and food is then scarce, rabbits become the prey of larger animals. However, among the rabbits of that region some suffer a chance variation and become lighter in colour. These lighter rabbits are more difficult to see in the snow, and so escape while their darker brothers are more frequently killed for food by the larger animals. The result is that, after a long period of time, the whiter rabbits become more and more numerous while the darker brownish rabbits gradually

disappear from that region altogether. There has been in this imaginary example a natural selection among rabbits, and the lighter have survived because in the particular environment which we have described they were the fittest to survive. It was in some such way, according to the Darwinian theory, that the monsters, which are now found only in the form of fossil remains, disappeared in the past and that their places have been taken by the animals with which we are now familiar. In historical times there have been changes such as the brown rat taking the place of the black rat in Great Britain in the eighteenth century which can be readily explained in terms of Darwin's theory.[1] We are not here concerned with the validity of Darwin's theory in biology, but it may be suggested that even among plants and animals natural selection is only one among many tendencies at work in determining the course of development.

The concept of evolution in the Darwinian sense was soon used either literally or figuratively for many other kinds of development than that of plant or animal species. People talked of the evolution of societies, of institutions, of religion, of art, of morals and of conduct, sometimes merely suggesting that these things change in the course of history, but sometimes with the definite implication that the changes take place in accordance with the principles of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If we were engaged in a study of the positive science of ethics, and were merely describing man's conduct or even the various standards by which man's conduct has been judged in the course of history, we would certainly need to admit that there has been a development in human conduct and in the standards by which man has judged it. It is likely too that the conduct which is still practised and the standards which are still held are in some sense more fitted to our circumstances than those which have disappeared, or, to use another vague phrase often used by evolutionists, the surviving conduct and the surviving standards lead to a more complete adjustment to our environment. This admission, however, scarcely touches the

[1] This is hardly a case of direct struggle between the two species as Darwin thought, but one where the black rat failed for a time to adapt itself to new conditions.

normative science of ethics. If the standard of ethics is to be provided by the theory of evolution and by nothing else, then we would need to hold that better conduct is merely more developed conduct or conduct occurring at a later stage in the course of history, and that no other meaning can be given to the terms 'good' and 'right'. It is doubtful whether any moralist has ever accepted an evolutionary theory in this strict sense. What most evolutionists would maintain is that as a matter of fact later or more developed conduct is better than earlier or less developed conduct without supposing that 'good' or 'better' can be defined in terms of development. Yet it is a definition of ethical terms that we are really seeking in a theory of ethics, but of course any attempt to define good in terms of historical or biological development would commit Dr. Moore's naturalistic fallacy. This is indeed the case where the fallacious nature of a naturalistic definition is most obvious to the plain man; when we use the term 'good' in common speech, we certainly do not mean 'occurring later in the course of evolution'.

The Darwinian theory has, however, given a special direction to the evolutionary theory of ethics in connecting good conduct with survival. What an evolutionary theory might legitimately say about survival is that a type of conduct which survives in a 'struggle for existence' between different types of conduct is the better—a view in which it would have the support of the popular press which seems to hold that the type of civilization of the conquerors in a war is always better than that of the vanquished. What some evolutionists seem to say is that conduct which causes the doer of that conduct or even the race to which he belongs to survive is good conduct. It may be a plausible theory that prolongation of life either in the individual or in the race is a good thing, so that all actions leading to it are good, but this is not an evolutionary theory of ethics. It is a teleological theory holding that prolongation of life is either the only end or one of the ends to which all right conduct is directed.

We have remarked that the introduction of a standard other than the purely evolutionary one is characteristic of most so-called evolutionary theories of ethics. There seems to be something unstable about every evolutionary theory which

tends to turn it into a theory of a different type. This is especially true of the greatest of evolutionary theories of ethics, that of the nineteenth-century English philosopher, Herbert Spencer.

§2. *The Theory of Herbert Spencer*

We shall now state Spencer's theory in a small number of propositions, sticking as far as we can to his own words. (i) Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations, and conduct comprehends all adjustments of acts to ends. (ii) The conduct to which we apply the name 'good' is relatively more evolved conduct, and the conduct to which we apply the name 'bad' is relatively less evolved. (iii) A developed adjustment of acts to ends or later conduct in the course of evolution furthers prolongation of life and an increased amount of life. (iv) Life is good or bad according as it does or does not give a surplus of agreeable feeling, that is, of pleasantness. (v) Life as a matter of fact does give such a surplus of pleasantness. (vi) What ultimately gives authority to all moral rules is the fear of pain or punishment. (vii) The particular moral rules accepted by any community at any period of history depend on natural selection in accordance with circumstances, so that, at the present day, conduct gains ethical sanction in proportion as it becomes less militant and more industrial. (viii) It is an intuitive principle that every man is free to choose and do what he wills, provided he does not infringe the equal freedom of any other man. (Spencer implies that he will use this freedom to seek his own good.) (ix) In the course of development, conduct is less controlled by proximate ends and more controlled by remote ends, and the sense of duty is an internal sanction securing that conduct is controlled by more remote ends.

In Spencer's theory we can see three influences at work, namely (a) the utilitarianism of his day which provided a hedonistic background for most ethical reflection, (b) the biological theory of evolution and (c) the individualism of Victorian liberalism with its emphasis on the freedom of the individual and the undesirability of interference by the state

as in the economic doctrine of *laisser faire*. It is clear from the very outset that Spencer was not satisfied with the purely evolutionary theory of ethics that better conduct is nothing but more evolved conduct. He implied that this is a statement requiring proof, and he proceeded to give proofs of it. For Spencer, conduct was an adjustment to environment, but good conduct was an adjustment of a special kind. It is not a fair criticism of Spencer's theory to say with Mackenzie that 'adjustment to environment' cannot provide a moral standard because there are so many kinds of adjustment.[1] Death with its 'dust to dust' is from a chemical point of view the most complete adjustment that a human organism can make to its environment, and yet no one would suggest the pursuit of death as a moral aim. We make adjustments for different ends or purposes and the goodness of a piece of conduct depends on the nature of the end as well as on the efficiency of the adjustment on teleological principles. Spencer certainly realized this for he defined conduct as comprehending all adjustments of acts to *ends*. A more valid criticism would be that Spencer was too much influenced by biology where, if we can say there is purpose at all, that purpose is merely to prolong life and to produce offspring, and this cannot be regarded as the end of *moral* action. Nor can we admit the relevancy of Mackenzie's point that in the higher human activities like those of the inventor we do not so much adjust ourselves to our environment as adjust or modify our environment to suit our own purpose, as, for example, when we dig a canal from a river to irrigate our fields.[2] The adjustment of act to end may be either an action which modifies ourselves as in learning a new activity, or it may be an action modifying our environment as in building a bridge; the relevant part for teleological ethics is that the adjustment leads to an end.

So for Spencer the important question was 'What are the ends to which better or more evolved conduct leads?' and Spencer gave three answers: (a) prolongation of life; (b) an 'increased amount' of life, perhaps something like the 'life more abundant' of the Gospel; and (c) pleasure. If he were

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 5, §vi.

[2] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics* (as above), p. 200 (6th Edition).

to have demanded a single moral end Spencer would have needed to show that the longest life is at the same time both the fullest life and the one containing the greatest amount of pleasure. Spencer did make some attempt to prove this. He held that it is evident that life does give a surplus of pleasure to each human individual; how debatable this statement is can be seen from the fact that in the same century the German pessimists Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann were denying that life gives a balance of pleasure chiefly on the grounds that desire, which is the most characteristic phenomenon of life, is painful and that labour, which is the lot of most men, is irksome. Even if we were to accept Spencer's statement that life as a whole gives a surplus of pleasure, it would not follow that the prolongation of life would be the only or the best way of increasing pleasure. Indeed the experience of man suggests that if the term of life is extended beyond the normal span of 'three-score years and ten' the result is 'labour and sorrow', not pleasure. It is possible on Spencer's premises to contemplate more alarming ways of increasing the amount of pleasure, such as an indefinite increase in the population with each new individual adding his small quota to the total surplus of pleasure. Spencer did not make the notion of an 'increased amount of life' clear; he may have meant merely a more pleasant life, but he probably meant a more complex life, or to use an elaborate phrase of his own, a life of 'coherent differentiated heterogeneity' rather than of 'incoherent undifferentiated homogeneity'. It is doubtful, however, whether such complexity makes life either more pleasant or morally better in the common meaning of these words. Still it is conceivable that there may be three different ends which give value to the conduct leading to them, and that, while these help one another to some extent, in other respects they suggest different lines of conduct.

The question may be asked whether conduct later in the course of evolution leads to any or all of these ends. Primitive tradition as in the Biblical book of Genesis holds that the lives of primitive men were longer than those now enjoyed, and, while it is true that in the last century the 'expectation of life' in western countries has greatly increased we have not

had yet scientific observations over a long enough period to show whether this is a particular phase or a universal characteristic of the course of evolution. There is certainly a richness of living brought about by modern invention, but there is dispute as to whether it is the kind of richness which could be called morally better; Rousseau did not think so, and Mr. Gandhi to-day takes the same view. People of the same outlook would also deny that the developed life of civilized man is more pleasant than the life of the primitive man. There may, however, be grounds for holding that Spencer is right, that the course of evolution moves in all these three directions; we have certainly not enough empirical evidence to make definite statements one way or the other.

A more fundamental objection to Spencer's theory is to the truly evolutionary part of it, namely the assumption that conduct at a later stage in evolution is morally better than conduct at an earlier stage. There is much in popular thought to support the opposite view. In many civilizations men have thought that there was a golden age of virtue and innocency in the distant past, and at many periods of history, even those who admit material progress often look back to the preceding age as one of 'plain living and high thinking'. The experiences of recent years with racial persecution and war on a terrific scale can hardly give confidence to those who believe in an inevitable moral progress as time goes on. We may doubt also whether any of the three ends suggested by Spencer have any very strong claim to be regarded as the result of the conduct which men call 'right' or 'good'. In the case of pleasure it has already been suggested that pleasure is at most only one element in the moral end, or perhaps one among several moral ends, and we shall see later that its place on the scale of values is probably a low one. There are certain forms of good conduct, temperance, for example, which, other things being equal, do lead to the prolongation of individual life; but other forms of good conduct, such as courage and benevolence in their more self-sacrificing forms almost certainly tend to shorten the lives of their possessors. A more reasonable view, and one that Spencer might have accepted, is that good conduct tends to preserve the life of

the race rather than that of the individual, and this theory would have a place for those acts of self-sacrifice and heroism in which the individual loses his own life for the sake of his community. The mistake in this argument is that it would make the rules of eugenics the most important of all moral rules. These rules may certainly have some place in a moral code, but this theory of ethics cannot explain how men have intuitively recognized it to be right to do certain things which eugenics would forbid, such as to preserve the life of the deformed, the mentally feeble and the sickly, the very people whose continued existence threatens the health and vigour of the race. We have already suggested that Spencer's 'amount of life' is too vague a phrase for scientific examination, but it certainly ignores the fact that throughout the history of civilization there have been two ideals of the good life—the rich, full life of knowledge, art and many-sided activity (the kind of life that we associate with the Renaissance in Europe), and the simple single-minded life which neglects much that would be otherwise attractive in the steadfast pursuit of a single purpose (the kind of life that we associate with the Stoic and the saint). This second kind of life certainly lacks the heterogeneity of the first, but many people hold it to be morally better. In his absolute ethics, the ethics of a world in which there is a complete adjustment of the individual to his environment Spencer held that pleasure would be the ultimate standard. He referred to 'actions of a kind purely pleasurable alike in their immediate and remote effects—actions absolutely right'.

§3. *Evolution without Teleology*

Darwin's theory was an attempt to explain the development of animal species without the notion of purpose and to show how, by purely mechanical causes, later species developed from earlier species. How far he was successful in doing so is a question for the biologist. The phrase 'survival of the fittest' suggests to the mind of a moralist at least fitness for some end or purpose, even if that purpose be merely to remain alive. In our examination of Spencer's theory we have seen that he certainly introduced the notion of ends again

and again in his evolutionary ethics. Good conduct for him is not merely conduct at a later stage in the course of evolution; it is conduct which leads to longer life or to fuller life, or to a surplus of pleasantness.

Spencer himself regarded the course of evolution as moving in the direction of an equilibrium, 'a balanced combination of internal actions in face of external forces tending to overthrow it'. Mackenzie has pointed out that this aspect of the course of evolution has been emphasized by other evolutionary moralists including Leslie Stephen and S. S. Alexander.[1] The idea of a balance among tendencies in the life of the good man is by no means a new one in ethics. Plato taught it explicitly in his view of justice as the virtue by which each part of our human nature performs its proper function in harmony with the other parts, and there is a similar view underlying Aristotle's notion of the good as a mean; but these views will concern us later. The view of the standard as a law of reason held that there is a coherence among themselves in morally good actions, and the notion of a harmony in the development of the capacities of human nature will play a large part in the conception of the standard as perfection with which we shall be occupied in our next chapter. Alexander brought out the importance of an equilibrium among the contending inclinations of an individual, when he wrote: 'This moral ideal is an adjusted order of conduct, which is based upon contending inclinations, and establishes an equilibrium between them'.[2] Mackenzie interprets Leslie Stephen's view as holding that 'virtue means efficiency with a view to the maintenance of social equilibrium'; and, although Leslie Stephen[3] hardly gives to this notion the emphasis that Mackenzie suggests, the notion of 'equilibrium' in evolutionary ethics requires examination, and the following remarks may be made about it. (a) The tendency to reach an equilibrium is certainly not the only tendency in the course of evolution, and conduct may survive for other reasons than because of its tending towards a state of equilibrium. It may survive for example because it is more

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 5, §vii.

[2] Alexander: *Moral Order and Progress*, p. 399.

[3] In his book, *The Science of Ethics*.

suited to the circumstances of a new environment. (b) As we have suggested already, coherence or equilibrium among the different tendencies of an individual or a community is of very little moral value unless the tendencies are in themselves good tendencies. (c) The preservation of an equilibrium at some stage of ethical development ahead of the present stage would mean a maintenance of the *status quo* rather than the creative pursuit of new types of good activity which is characteristic of the moral life at its best and which we might expect to find emphasized in an evolutionary theory of ethics.

§4. *Natural Selection in Ethics*

Is there natural selection and a survival of the fittest in the sphere of morality as there is in the sphere of biological evolution? If we were dealing with the positive science of ethics we could certainly make some generalizations very like those that are made by the biologists. Individuals and races may vary their conduct, just like the 'chance variations' of the biologist, and we may believe that certain varieties of conduct will lead the race or individuals that practise them to survive, while those practising other types of conduct will perish. There may be a struggle for existence in the world of men as in the world of animals; only in the developed stages of that struggle the qualities which lead to survival will change, as Spencer himself realized. The use of intelligence, as in the construction of aeroplanes and atomic bombs, and co-operation for mutual protection with its place for qualities of generosity to others and fair play among allies are obviously of the greatest value for survival in modern warfare. There seem to be varieties of conduct suited to certain environments; polygamy was certainly more useful for survival in days when much manual labour was required in the life of the nomadic tribe or the primitive agricultural settlement than it is in the machine-filled life of a modern industrial city. We may too regard the struggle as a struggle not among men but among standards, and here too we may see that certain standards of moral approval tend to survive in certain environments; the virtue of courage is emphasized

in a time of war while the virtue of thrift is emphasized in a country building up its resources under a capitalistic régime.

The survival of the fittest among moral ideas, however, has certain definite differences from the survival of the fittest among races or species, as Alexander pointed out in an article on 'National Selection in Morals'.[1] The only way of survival in the Darwinian scheme is the propagation of one's own species and the destruction of rival ones. A similar process takes place among men when supporters of a particular set of moral values set out to destroy those with rival views or to impose their own views by force on those subordinate to them. Yet we have heard the word 'unnatural' used as the most suitable adjective for the ideological race massacres of our own time, a term which suggests that we do not look on these things as a part of the natural course of evolution. The great methods among men of making moral ideas survive have been those of education and persuasion. It is because of these that ideas originally held by a minority become the prevailing moral ideas of an age, as we can see in the story of the abolition of slavery. It has even been thought that ideas which it has been attempted to suppress by violence have a better chance of survival; the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church.

Even in these circumstances we are still dealing with positive ethics and we have no reason to think that the ideas which survive [illegible] always the best ideas from the point of view of ethics. For example, when the decision to prohibit the sale of certain intoxicating liquors was made in the United States of America, this did not indicate that the prohibition was necessarily right, although many reformers hailed it as such at the time. It would be equally foolish to think that the repeal of the prohibition laws showed that they were unfit to survive and morally wrong. Yet there may be a true explanation of both the imposition and the repeal of the prohibition laws which uses only natural factors, as Darwin set out to do in his explanation of biological changes. Scientific explanation of an event has nothing directly to do with its moral value. If we are to maintain that the standards of

[1] *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. II, No. 4.

ethics ultimately to be reached by the human race are the highest possible, it must be done on other grounds than those of purely natural selection. It may be done on the religious ground that God is working out a purpose of this kind in the life of this planet (a view that many Christians have held as a part of their faith), or on some other metaphysical ground. Merely natural selection can at the most preserve standards which are suited to a particular environment; it can do nothing to secure that these are morally the best.

§5. *Modern Theories of Evolution*

It is perhaps hardly worth our trouble to have given so much consideration to Darwin's theory of natural selection, as even biologists now tend to accept other forms of the evolutionary theory. Some of these other forms differ greatly from the original theory of Darwin, and one or two of them appear to be more significant for ethics than that theory ever was.

A well-known modern evolutionary theory is the theory of 'Emergent Evolution' taught chiefly by Lloyd Morgan. We usually think of development taking place by strictly mechanical causation, so that if we know the causes at work at any moment of evolution, we can tell the effects which will follow, just as when we know the weather conditions we can in some measure predict the quantity of a harvest. Lloyd Morgan held that evolution does not always proceed by strictly predictable steps, but that at various stages the causal factors at work result in the emergence of something new, an 'emergent' as this theory calls it, which could not have been predicted from a knowledge of the causes already at work, however complete that knowledge may be. The emergence of life from non-living matter and the emergence of mind from living matter are two of the most striking examples of the appearance of what is new and unpredictable in the course of evolution. In a similar way there may be an emergence of the non-naturalistic from the merely mechanical, or an emergence of conduct determined by ideals of what is right from conduct determined by natural causes. Of course Lloyd Morgan gave no explanation of how such an emergence

takes place. The very fact that it is unpredictable implies that there is no scientific explanation of it. Still the view that we have to accept with a 'natural piety' the fact that such emergences do take place elsewhere in the course of evolution does mean that even the scientifically minded can accept it as possible that at a certain stage in development conduct is no longer determined by mechanical causes but by ideals.

When a man is asked to explain a process, for example the working of his watch, he may set about doing it in two ways. He may explain it by the energy, accumulated in the spring through the process of winding, being released under the control of some regulating mechanism. This is explanation by mechanical causes, causes which begin to work before the process takes place, or what Mackenzie called 'explanation by beginning'.[1] The ordinary man, however, is even more likely to explain the working of the watch by showing how it tells him the time. This is explanation by the purpose or end of the process, what followers of Aristotle called the 'final' cause; Mackenzie called this 'explanation by end'.[2] It has been the endeavour of natural sciences to use mechanical explanations and not explanations by end which may be named teleological explanations. Human conduct may be explained in the same two ways. In our ordinary talk we use more commonly the teleological explanation and explain a man's action, for example his taking a certain journey, by his purpose in doing so. Modern psychologists belonging to the schools of either behaviourism or psycho-analysis make attempts to explain action in terms of antecedent events in the agent's mind very much in the fashion of the physical sciences. The original Darwinian theory belonged to the same scientific outlook, and tried to explain the development of animal and plant kinds by merely natural causes. But the outlook, even among scientists, is changing, and the special characteristic of such modern developments of the evolutionary theory such as 'Emergent Evolution' is that they give a larger place to purpose or teleology, and this is very significant for ethics, where one group of moral thinkers, the

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 5, §iv.

[2] Mackenzie: op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. 5, §x.

teleological group, has regarded conduct as good or bad according to the ends which it has in view.

The French philosopher, Bergson, however, was not satisfied with teleological explanations of conduct and of the course of evolution. He held that all such explanations still mean that our actions are determined, not now by the antecedent causes of the physical sciences but by the ends to which they lead, and he thought this to be inconsistent with that freedom which we intuitively know to be the very essence of our life and consciousness. Accordingly, Bergson attempted to explain the course of evolution neither like the earlier Darwinians by accidental variations due to causes already at work, nor like the teleologists by the working out of the purpose of a beneficent creator who has given a like power to his human creatures, but by a creative impulse or 'vital surge'. This has been present in nature from the beginning, manifesting itself in new forms of living creatures, and in human life it shows itself in new forms of conduct. Creativeness or the power of producing the new and the unpredictable is of the very nature of the evolutionary process. So the emergence of ideals and even the later appearance of new ideals in the moral life is not a difficulty to be solved, but is just what one would expect from the creative nature of reality. Evolution is neither mechanical nor teleological but creative.

§6. *Creative Morality*

If creativeness is characteristic of all evolution, then an evolutionary theory of ethics may hold that goodness and creativeness are identical or that conduct is better in so far as it is more creative. This would be a reasonable development of Bergson's theory and certain moralists have to some degree accepted it chiefly in close relation to a particular theory of theology. Professor L. A. Reid finds the same creativeness in an act of goodness as he does in a work of art.[1] Most moralists make the mistake of trying to find the goodness of an action in one abstract part of it, but just as the goodness of a work of art is in the concrete whole, so the goodness of a good action is in the action as a whole, not in its motive alone,

[1] L. A. Reid: *Creative Morality*, Ch. 6.

as some of the intuitionists have said, and not in its pleasant consequences alone, as the utilitarians have said. There is always something unique and irreplaceable about a good action as there is about a work of art. There are rules to be followed by the artist and by the moralist, but the artist who simply follows the rules of his craft slavishly and does nothing more will never produce a great work of art. Similarly Professor Reid considers that 'our true duty lies not in obeying a general rule, but in doing a unique action within an individual concrete situation which has never occurred before and never will occur again', and we can see the right act only by imaginative individual insight.[1] Professor Reid finds that an intense interest in persons is what keeps morality from becoming conventional and devoid of significance as it often does. It is love rather than a sense of duty which is the moving force in creative morality. In this Professor Reid follows Bergson, who held that open morality, the morality which extends to all men, has '*agape*' or love as its principle.[2]

The Russian theologian, M. Berdyaev, distinguishes between three levels of ethics, (a) the ethics of law where morality consists in obeying rules, (b) the ethics of redemption or grace where man himself as concretely personal, and not obedience to law, is regarded as the supreme end of life, where the moral law is for the sake of man and not man for the sake of the law, and (c) the ethics of creativeness.[3] M. Berdyaev points out like Bergson that whether we accept the standard as law or the standard as an end to which good conduct leads, man is still a slave to rule; the rule in the first case is fixed by some outside authority; the rule in the second case is fixed by the end at which man aims. And this enslavement to rule leads to what Berdyaev calls 'the intolerable dullness of virtue'. Creativeness is the making of something new, of something that never has existed in the world before. It implies freedom and it implies that 'each individual must act as himself and not as another would have acted in his place, and his moral activity must spring from the depths of his own conscience'.[4]

[1] L. A. Reid: *Creative Morality*, p. 104.

[2] Bergson: *Morality and Religion*, p. 27.

[3] Berdyaev: *The Destiny of Man*.

[4] op. cit., p. 172.

Berdyaev at the same time emphasizes the point that in such creative morality the unique concrete personality of the human individual is the highest value in the moral life and moral action is not merely a means for the triumph of a universal law. The thing that matters in man's creative activity is not so much the end to be achieved as the realization of his creative energy. In fighting for a good cause it is commonly agreed that what matters most is the quality of one's fighting and not the issue of the battle. Creativeness may bring its owner happiness, but that is a mere accidental consequence and never the aim of the creative act. Indeed, M. Berdyaev suggests that the final end of good conduct, as distinct from the conduct itself, is judged rather in terms of beauty than of moral goodness. M. Berdyaev concludes that the development of morality is in the direction of freedom, compassion (as evidenced by a growing tenderness to weak folk, children and animals), and creativeness.[1]

This aspect of creativeness is certainly something that does not seem to have a place in most of the familiar ethical theories, and the fact of the new emphasis on it in present-day ethical thought may itself be an evidence for the evolution of morality. Whether we can accept the theory of creative evolution, as it has been taught by Bergson or by other modern philosophers, is a question for the metaphysician rather than the moralist, but it does point to something that the older evolutionists ignored, the presence of free, unique and creative activity in the course of evolution. For ethics this notion has a special importance. It has been generally agreed that freedom of some kind or other is a necessary postulate for morality. There appears too in the case of certain moral actions, and these actions of the highest moral quality, something of the same uniqueness that we find in a great poem or in a great picture. While there appears to be a larger place in morality for obedience to rule and aspiration after ends of value than M. Berdyaev recognizes, there is surely also a place for creativeness, the expression of goodness in new kinds of action. Yet we need to be reminded that what is important about an action is not that it is new and unique but that it is good, and to mix these up would be a bad

[1] Berdyaev: op. cit., p. 196.

case of the naturalistic fallacy. To admit creativeness and uniqueness to morality may seem to give it an indefiniteness and freedom which a scientific theory of ethics cannot cope with, and it may be actually the case that there is something about goodness that is intractable to scientific handling. It may be, however, that creative evolution is pointing us again to one of those laws of nature that are at the basis of the moral life as of the universe generally, a law that there is a fundamental creativeness both in nature and in morality.

Chapter XI

THE STANDARD AS PERFECTION

§1. *Self-Realization*

Rashdall has pointed out that the word 'self-realization', which has often been used to describe the aim of the moral life, cannot mean the making of the self real, as its form would suggest, for the self is real already.[1] It may mean, and generally does mean the making of the self perfect. A good deal of the plausibility of evolutionary theories of ethics is derived from the fact that many people believe that the course of evolution tends to the production of more perfect kinds of plants and animals, for example to more perfect dogs, more perfect horses, more perfect roses or more perfect oranges. In these cases, however, the deliberate direction of man in controlling the breeding of animals and the fertilization of plants has done more than nature ever did in producing more perfect kinds. This suggests that a conscious choice of activities and a deliberate pursuit of ends is the way of attaining human perfection rather than leaving it to the natural course of evolution. There is one radical difference between evolutionary perfection and moral perfection as these words are commonly used. In evolution we are concerned with the perfection of the kind or the race, each individual counting only for the more perfect kind it may help to produce, and for attaining such perfection the most important known rules are those of eugenics. In morality, as the phrase self-realization reminds us, the perfection with which we are concerned is the perfection of the individual self, and every individual counts.

Aristotle gave to the end or final cause of the moral life the name of 'eudaimonia' (ἐυδαιμονία), and while the Greeks used this word for something very near to what we call 'happiness' or even 'prosperity' in English it is safer not to

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. II, p. 62 (1).

attempt to translate a word to which Aristotle certainly gave a special technical significance. Aristotle defined 'eudaimonia' as the exercise of a man's soul (or realization of a man's capacities) in accordance with 'excellence' (or 'virtue'), and if there be more than one excellence, in accordance with the best and most complete excellence.[1] The word that has been translated 'exercise' or 'realization' is the word from which our English word 'energy' comes, and has something of its connotation of active working. The question raised by this definition as by all perfection theories of ethics is which capacities of our nature are most worth developing. The acrobat certainly develops some capacities of his nature to a very remarkable extent, but it is doubtful whether a capacity to turn somersaults and to walk on one's head has any moral value, except perhaps a small one in giving some pleasure to spectators. There are intellectual capacities of a similar kind, such as solving crossword puzzles or chess problems, the development of which may give a certain satisfaction to their possessors but which can hardly be thought to add to his moral goodness. Even in the case of those capacities which are found developed to some degree in most normal men, there are clear differences of value. It is generally held to be right to develop one's capacity for sympathy as much as possible, but not one's capacity for eating. The idea of an all-round development of capacities is attractive and found a supporter in as great a thinker as Bradley, who held that a man's [illegible] should be 'to widen in every way both the world of knowledge and the realm of practice'.[2] There is probably much to be said for the view that each individual should develop capacities of different kinds, by taking some sort of physical exercise, engaging in some intellectual pursuit and having some form of spiritual aspiration. At the same time it is certain that a certain amount of specialization on the part of individuals is good for society, for example that some individuals should give themselves to medical or scientific research so completely that they leave themselves neither time nor opportunity for developing the rest of their capacities. Nor can we say that goodness consists in the development of a

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, 7 (1098a).

[2] Bradley: *Principles of Logic*, p. 452.

man's higher capacities (however these may be defined) at the price of neglecting his lower capacities, for it is desirable that to some extent at least the lower capacities should be developed also. The neglect of the development of a good digestion may handicap a man greatly in his social relations and in his scientific or artistic pursuits. There is some place, too, for the deliberate renunciation of the development of a man's capacities in the good life; the story of the saints is that of men who have 'denied themselves' by deliberately abandoning pursuits, worthy in themselves, which would have led to a richer self-realization. Such men renounced the enjoyment of family life or the practice of art or the search for knowledge in order to carry out some social purpose or religious ideal. What is evident from all that has been said is that a theory of self-realization, in order to be valid, must indicate which human capacities are to be developed and to what degree each is to be developed.

§2. *Spiritual Evolution*

The German philosopher, Hegel, also regarded the story of the universe as a process of development or evolution, but not as a biological evolution determined by mechanical laws. It is a spiritual evolution, taking place according to a dialectical or logical process, and it reaches the highest development so far reached in the self-conscious life of man. The course of animal development which culminates in man is in the direction of a fuller self-consciousness, the ability not merely to know but to reflect on one's own knowing. Even in human history we can see a dialectical growth in this power of thought reflecting on itself, which finds its expression in philosophy. This spiritual evolution differs from biological evolution in that fuller self-consciousness may be the conscious goal of the individual.

The view that reason is the characteristic quality of man was held by Aristotle, who held that reason was the best excellence in accordance with which man's soul may be developed. Now it is certainly a fact that, without a certain amount of deliberate reflection (which is a combination of Aristotle's reason and Hegel's self-consciousness), a man could not be regarded as fully human and would certainly

be incapable of those plans for the betterment of others and his own self-improvement which are characteristic of the good man. Yet it is hard to believe that moral goodness is in an unusual degree characteristic of those who carry this deliberate reflection to extreme forms in the more abstract analyses of logic and metaphysics. It may be admitted that the abstract philosopher is performing a useful function in society, and certainly one which very few people are capable of performing, but the mere fact that 'reason' and 'self-consciousness' are more developed in him than they are in others does not seem to make the philosopher morally better than the faithful doctor or the far-seeing statesman. It is likely that Aristotle and Hegel were both biased in favour of the philosophic way of life.

Of course Hegel did not hold that goodness consists in the isolated individual seeking his independent good by realizing more and more fully his own capacity for self-consciousness. Indeed the emphasis of Hegel was on the social system to which the individual belongs rather than on the individual himself. The conscious effort of the individual to realize his own good, while it is certainly better than mere obedience to external laws, is useless and even evil, unless it is in harmony with the social institutions in which the universal or absolute mind expresses itself. These institutions are the family, society and the state. Hegel conceived of the process of evolution as a logical movement from thesis to antithesis contradicting the thesis, and then to a synthesis which combines thesis and antithesis, and may serve its turn as a new thesis. Similarly in moral evolution there is a movement from a goodness that is simply an outward obedience to externally imposed rules to a goodness that consists in the inward submission to the internal faculty of conscience, and these two find their synthesis in a social morality, a life 'that is gradually shared by the developing consciousness of the community in its effort to attain the highest perfection of which human nature is capable'. To put Hegel's theory in another way, the 'good will' which Kant made the basis of morality was with Hegel no longer the will of the individual imposing rules on himself, but the universal will which becomes self-conscious in the course of evolution. In fact, the ethics

of Hegel, so far from over-emphasizing the place of individual self-realization, do not give a large enough place to the individual as a moral agent.

§3. *The Theory of T. H. Green*[1]

The influence of Hegel was very marked in English ethical thought during the second half of the nineteenth century, and we may take as an example of ethical idealism in England the theory of T. H. Green.[1] Green held that the characteristic part of human nature is the 'spiritual principle' by which man knows himself to be distinct from the world of nature, and because of which he is self-conscious. This principle, however, is not to be regarded merely as an additional part or faculty of the human mind over and above the capacities which man shares with the lower animals, and working as it were in a separate compartment from them. On the other hand the spiritual principle works through and transforms these humbler capacities. For example, man has sensations of colours and sounds just as the lower animals have these sensations, but in man these are so modified by the spiritual principle that they become perceptions, and these differ from sensations in having meanings of which man is directly conscious. Similarly man has appetites like hunger and thirst just as the lower animals have these appetites, but in man these are so modified by the spiritual principle that they become desires in which a man is conscious of the particular ends which he knows to be likely to satisfy him, and at which he deliberately aims. The appetite of hunger becomes the desire for food, and its owner knows that food will give him the required nourishment and satisfaction. Green held that what is good is what satisfies desire, not in the sense of satisfying particular animal wants but in the sense of satisfying or realizing the self-conscious personality as a whole. An act of will, according to Green, is one in which an individual directs himself to the realization of some idea as to an object in which for the time he seeks his satisfaction.[2] This power of looking forward to the realization of an idea is

[1] T. H. Green: *Prolegomena to Ethics*

characteristic of the spiritual principle in man and is one power in which he is a reproduction of the spiritual principle of the universe which we call God. Just as God conceived the universe, so human beings have the power of conceiving a future state of themselves that is better than the present, and of realizing this conception by their volitions. It is clear that we do not know the moral ideal in all its fullness, but self-conscious reason enables us to see as it were the next stage in our moral advance and when, by our willing, we have reached that stage, our reason will reveal to us a further stage. Green was in agreement with Hegel that the moral ideal is thus to be progressively attained only in a social life which we share with other self-conscious beings.

It is not only in man that the spiritual principle of the universe manifests itself in rational activities. Even in animal and plant life there is a certain adjustment of means to end in what we now call 'goal-directed' activities. Only we have no reason to think that animals are self-conscious or able to reflect on their mental processes. Reason works unconsciously in the animal world, but as the animal developes into the man, this hidden rational principle becomes open and conscious. So with Green the realization of a man's spiritual capacities which is the aim of morality is linked up with the process of evolution. Green held that the signs of reason in the animate and even in the inanimate universe are due to the fact that the ultimate reality of the universe is the one supernatural self-conscious intelligence which men call God. There is a certain vagueness in Green as in other idealists as to how the individual human mind is related to the divine mind, but Green held explicitly that our spirits are reproductions of God's spirit, and for this reason, we are able in a small measure to understand in our sciences and philosophies the universe which is God's creation and to play our part in bringing into fuller self-consciousness the spiritual principle in ourselves.

Like Hegel, Green traced the growth of the spiritual principle in the course of history. As man has developed in self-consciousness, his morality has increased in inwardness, and he has realized more and more that the motives and intentions which he can observe only by reflection are more

significant for morality than the mere outside bodily movements. And the moral ideal has become wider, for as man has engaged in reflection, he has realized that goodness must be shown not merely to his own family or tribe or nation, but to all mankind, and even in some measure to the animal world. It appears to him irrational to set narrower bounds than this to the sphere of moral relations and so historically there has been a gradual extension of the area within which the rules of morality are held to apply.

Mackenzie, in his treatment of Green,[1] used the terms 'rational', 'spiritual', and 'self-conscious', as if they describe the same element in human nature, and ethical idealists are apt to cause confusion by doing so. The term 'spiritual' is, however, a very wide and somewhat vague term, including all of men's higher aspirations, towards creative art, communion with God and ideal social relations, as well as the intellectual quest for truth and self-consistency. 'Rational', on the other hand, is a term applying to the activities of the intellect, particularly those more abstract operations of logic and mathematics with which men exercise their intellectual powers. There does not seem to be any more moral goodness in such rational activities than in others which certainly make less use of the reason, for example the making of music. What gives plausibility to the confusion of the rational and the spiritual is the fact that in all spiritual activities one condition of success is the harmonious working together of all the capacities concerned, and freedom from contradiction in the sense that we do not act in ways which hinder one another or which imply a belief in statements that contradict one another. We may express this by saying that freedom from contradiction is one among several characteristics of the good while it is the chief characteristic of the rational. It may be admitted that a theory of idealism like that of Hegel held on metaphysical grounds that the good and the rational are identical, but in the phenomenal aspect of the moral life to which a book like this is almost confined, they certainly are not identical. It is generally the case that good actions done with understanding are better than those done unconsciously and this was what Socrates emphasized

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 5, §xi.

when he said that knowledge is virtue. To this extent an increasing self-consciousness may mean an increasing goodness. Yet the highest type of moral character is often thought to be that of the man who does good works without thinking about them, for to him goodness has become a second nature. In any case, 'spiritual', 'rational' and 'self-conscious' are not synonyms.

§4. *My Station and its Duties*

One of the difficulties of the standard as perfection, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, is the fact that no individual can attain to the perfection of all his capacities, and that the attempt to do so would be socially unfortunate, for no one would be able to specialize in the single direction in which he may be able to render outstanding services to his community. So, with most idealists, each person is thought of as having his own particular place in a social system that is consciously aiming at the realization of a perfect humanity. There are great difficulties in this view. Men's conscious aspirations towards perfection belong to individuals and not to a mythological group mind, and a social organization gains moral perfection only in so far as it tends to the perfection of individuals. Idealists are on safer grounds when they pass from the individual mind right to the Absolute mind, where, according to the theistic members of their school, there is a concrete personality who may consciously aim at the perfection of humanity as a whole.

In the concrete moral life the living of a good life assuredly means the performing of a particular function in the community. The negative rules imposed by outside laws or even by the inner voice of conscience tend to make men think that goodness is a matter of abstaining from types of conduct that are forbidden, and the positive side of morality is reduced to a vague benevolence. A deeper insight shows that it is in the faithful and honest discharge of his daily work that the good man lives most of his life and manifests his goodness. In his *Ethical Studies*, perhaps the most stimulating book on ethics that was produced in the nineteenth century, F. H. Bradley pointed out that each individual has a particular 'station' in the society to which he belongs, for example as

teacher or as farmer or as labourer, and the most important part of his moral life consists in carrying out the duties of this particular station.[1] In doing so he is likely to discover a wider sphere of morality, for example in the social contacts he makes with his fellow-workers, but the duties that lie to his hand in his everyday occupation still hold the first place in his moral life. Even if we are able to do very little for the perfection of mankind as a whole, we certainly can do the duties of our own particular station. It is by attending to these that we shall discover practically the right compromise between self-realization and self-sacrifice which has been such a problem for moralists. In doing our daily duty we shall both spend our lives in the service of our fellow-men and develop towards perfection those of our own capacities which are most worth while developing. The fact that my particular station differs from the particular stations of others will mean that the course of development is different for different individuals. The aim of the good life is on no account to turn men out on the same pattern, even although it were a pattern of moral perfection like a row of guardsmen of equal height. Its aim is to make to some degree unique personalities, and surely this is another example of that creativeness which is fundamental both to life and to morality.

§5. *Eudaemonism*

We have seen that, in his theory of self-realization, Aristotle used 'eudaimonia', the Greek word for 'happiness', to describe the moral end, and the name 'eudaemonism' is used for a group of moral theories which connect the state of 'happiness' with the process of self-realization. We may define eudaemonism as the ethical theory which regards the moral end as the perfection of the total nature of man, involving his fullest happiness in the realization of his capacities. According to this theory, happiness differs from pleasure (a) in being the accompaniment not of one particular activity, but of the harmonious co-operation of all a man's activities, (b) in being a more permanent and less changeable state of mind, and (c) in being more closely bound up with the activities which it accompanies, so that it is not inappropriate

[1] Bradley: *Ethical Studies*, Essay V.

to speak of the activities as in some sense a part of the happiness. In the fullest sense of the word, happiness can only be predicated of a life as a whole—a fact that is expressed in the saying of Solon quoted by Aristotle:[1] 'Call no man happy till he is dead.' We may, however, say that an individual is happy in a less absolute way, if we take into account any fairly extensive group of harmonious activities. The suggestion in eudaemonism that happiness, a kind of higher pleasure, is the end of the moral life takes us back into many of the limitations and difficulties of hedonism. It is probably true to say about happiness what we have already said about pleasure; just as pleasure is not the aim of our actions but an accompaniment of their normal and successful performance, so happiness is not the aim of our lives but it is an accompaniment of the normal and successful carrying out of the duties of our station, to use again Bradley's phrase.

It is the *harmonious* carrying out of different functions of our organism that makes happiness different from pleasure. In any theory of the standard as perfection this harmony must find a large place. In the psychological part of our study we saw that the development of character consists largely in the harmonizing of our different sentiments and universes of desire, and in our study of the law of reason we were led to admit that one condition for good willing is coherence, the state in which our acts of will form a harmonious whole, and in no sense contradict one another. Eudaemonism has again emphasized this truth by showing that such harmonious co-operation produces a hedonic quality that is morally superior to that of mere pleasantness, namely happiness.

§6. *Conclusion*

The view of the standard as perfection provides in some measure a middle way between deontological and teleological theories of ethics. Deontologists say that the goodness of conduct depends entirely on the conduct itself; teleologists say that it depends on the goodness of the effects of the conduct. The perfection theory also holds that the goodness of conduct depends on the goodness of the result to which it leads, the relevant effect being that of a perfected character.

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 10.

It is difficult, however, to say what a perfect character is without saying that it is one which engages to a supreme degree in good conduct. In this case the standard as perfection would still require an analysis of what we mean by calling conduct good. For, if we maintain that good conduct is merely that which leads to good character, and good character is merely that character which manifests itself in good conduct, then we are arguing in a circle.

Nevertheless, the view of the standard as perfection does make clear certain characteristics of the good life. In Green's theory we have an explicit recognition that some elements in human nature are more worthy of realization than others and that what we may call the spiritual element is that which is most worthy of development. This is a view which is needed to correct the suggestion made by hedonism that all activities are of equal value, provided that they give equal totals of pleasantness. We are not prepared to identify this spiritual element with pure intellectual reason of the kind used in logic, although it is the case that consistency or coherence in willing is one feature of the good life. From Bradley we learned the truth that perfection is not the same for all individuals; each man's duty depends on his particular station, and in fulfilling this duty each man can realize his own special and probably unique kind of perfection. Eudaemonism points out that the harmonious realization of a man's capacities is accompanied by a lasting happiness which is different from and superior to the mere pleasantness which accompanies the satisfaction of each separate impulse or desire.

This view, however, ignores certain facts about the good life. It is almost certainly the case that our human nature cannot reach anything much in the way of moral goodness without struggle, and struggle is painful for it generally involves the checking and suppressing of certain of our desires. And the limitations of our human life mean that we have certainly to sacrifice the development of some capacities in order that we should reach perfection as far as we can in other directions, and this means self-sacrifice as well as self-realization. The conditions of society, at any rate as we know them, demand that the individual should sacrifice his own good, and that

may mean his own perfection, to the good of his society as a whole. Many whose education has been interrupted by the service of their country in a time of war, feel that in one direction at any rate their advance towards perfection has suffered an irreparable harm.

The discussion in this chapter has not solved the question with which it began: 'Which capacities of our human nature are most worth developing?' except in the very vague assertion that the spiritual element in human nature is the one most worthy of realization. One possible way of answering this question is the consideration of the results of the kinds of conduct in which our various capacities are engaged, the consideration which teleologists hold to be fundamental for ethics. If we can make up our mind as to which results of human activity are most worth while, we may be able to tell which of our capacities require to be developed to produce these results, and we may conclude that these are the capacities most worth developing. The question as to which results of human activity are most worth while is one that will concern us in the next chapter.

Chapter XII

THE STANDARD AS VALUE

§1. *The Concept of Value*

In our first chapter we made a distinction between ethics which deals with good and bad conduct and axiology which deals with good and bad things generally, beautiful pictures and mystic experiences as well as good conduct. Axiology is sometimes defined as the science of value, and one group of ethical theories, the teleological group, holds that when we call an action right or good all that we mean is that it brings about consequences that are of value. Unfortunately the common practice in English is to use the word good and not the word valuable when referring to things of value, and, at the risk of some ambiguity, we shall have to refer to things of value as good things. It is clear that there may be good things, in this axiological sense, which are not affected in any way by human actions, such as 'the starry heavens above', and ethics is not at all concerned with these. Even among the things produced in part by human action which are commonly called good, some appear to be produced by actions that we would not usually call 'right' or good in ethics. The moral quality of the conduct of a wine producer is commonly judged on other grounds than whether the wine he produces is good or bad. Prohibitionists would hold that his conduct while engaged in his trade is always wrong; and even those who admit its rightness will hold that this is affected only in a lesser degree by the quality of the wine he produces. We shall call those consequences of human actions which may be held to affect the rightness of the action 'morally good' or 'morally bad', and it is to be remembered that these consequences may be events, including actions, as well as what we usually call things. (It is just one of the characteristics of deontological theories of ethics that they hold that actions

are the only objects that can be morally good.) Our problem then is: 'Which consequences of value can be appropriately regarded as morally good?' The term 'value' itself came to ethics by way of economics, and in economics it is used for (a) value in use, that is, the capacity of an object to satisfy a human need or desire, and (b) value in exchange or the amount of one commodity that can be obtained in exchange for another, which in modern times is generally reckoned in terms of money and expressed as the price of the commodity. The prohibitionist cannot deny that wine has a value in use, for it certainly satisfies a human need or at any rate a human desire, and when we call a wine good, probably the greater part of what we mean is that this particular wine is more satisfying to the human palate than others (although we may include an aesthetic quality also in our judgement). We can leave aside the concept of 'value in exchange' with one remark. We are not likely to make the mistake that morally good things can be estimated in terms of money, but there is a real danger of our supposing from the analogy of economic value in exchange that good things, including the morally good, can always be estimated in quantitative terms so that we can calculate how much pleasure would compensate us, for example, for loss of communion with God. It was on this analogy that the utilitarians set about making the hedonistic calculus. One can imagine a Dr. Faustus supposing in his transaction with the devil that he had before him the comparative costs of his alternatives, but it seems far removed from the ordinary possibilities of the moral life.

The economic idea of 'value in use' points to a very important distinction among things of value. Sir David Ross has made a distinction between objects of satisfaction and objects of admiration.[1] Objects of satisfaction have what the economists call 'value in use'; everything that is satisfying to human beings in any way whatever has got such a value, and all pleasant objects, in as far as they are pleasant, are certainly objects of satisfaction. It is the contention of this chapter that objects are never morally good merely because they are objects of satisfaction; anyone who maintains that they are is committing the naturalistic fallacy. Yet in our

[1] W. D. Ross: *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 278.

common speech such things are very commonly referred to as good, simply because they are satisfying to the speaker. Objects of admiration may bring no satisfaction in the ordinary sense of the word to the person who admires them, except in so far as admiration is a psychologically satisfying condition; no one could say that the awful tragedy of King Lear satisfies a human desire. We must not say, however, that morally good objects are by definition objects of admiration and nothing else; that would be again to commit the naturalistic fallacy. Sir David Ross writes of 'worthy' objects of admiration and of 'worthy' or 'fit' objects of satisfaction,[1] and we shall need to examine whether such objects are to be included among the good things at which we ought to aim.

A more common division of values has been into instrumental values and absolute values. An instrumental value is the value that a thing has because it is a means of producing something else of value. The value of a machine for peeling potatoes is entirely instrumental; if peeled potatoes had not the value (also instrumental) of satisfying human hunger, a potato-peeling machine would not have had any value whatsoever. All the values in use with which economics deals are instrumental values. A thing that is good in itself and not because of its consequences has absolute value. It is commonly thought that only things of absolute value can be regarded as morally good because it is held that only such things can be worthy objects of our admiration. This view seems to be wrong; a piece of conduct which is merely a means to an end may be a worthy object of admiration. This explains why we can admire and regard as morally good the brave deeds of a soldier fighting for a cause that we believe to be a wrong cause; his action is a means to a bad end but it is a worthy object of admiration on account of its courageous quality.

In the earlier sections of this chapter we shall confine ourselves as far as we can to the teleological view that an action is right or morally good because it leads to consequences of value, consequences which may be things or events, which, so far as we have seen, may be of absolute value or instrumental value, and which, we have suggested, are to be found

[1] Op. cit. p. 279.

among objects of admiration rather than objects of satisfaction. We have not so far suggested which good consequences are worthy objects of admiration. In doing so, we shall need to bring in again the deontological view that actions are of value apart from their consequences. Before doing so we shall consider a conception, closely akin to that of absolute value, but more carefully defined, the conception of 'intrinsic' value.

§2. *Intrinsic Value*

Things may have value as parts of other things of value, or as means to ends of value. A pair of spectacles would have practically no value, except as a curious example of man's creative ingenuity, unless there were behind the spectacles eyes to see through them. The value of spectacles is certainly an instrumental value; they are valuable as means to be used by eyes for seeing objects. Some things may have value as parts of a larger whole; a particular lens may be quite useless by itself, but as part of a telescope it may be of such great value that, if it were to be lost, the telescope would be useless. We may call both these classes of value, value as means to an end and value as part of a whole, *extrinsic* values; there is probably no real difference and certainly no relevant difference between them. In contrast to these, there are objects which appear to have such value, that they would retain it even if they were to exist completely alone. According to the saints, communion with God is such an experience. Take everything else away and the experience of communion with God would still be of value. As Luther put it in his great hymn:

> 'And though they take my life,
> Goods, honour, children, wife,
> Yet is their profit small,
> These things shall perish all,
> The city of God remaineth!'

We may illustrate the concept of intrinsic values from ethical theories which we have already considered. Sidgwick held that pleasure was a thing of intrinsic value, indeed the only thing of intrinsic value. In his 'cool hour' of reflection

Sidgwick saw that if nothing remained, except the bare experience of pleasant feeling, it would still be of value. Kant, on the other hand, regarded pleasantness or happiness not as a thing of intrinsic value but as having extrinsic value only in the case of its forming part of an intrinsically good whole. He held that in an ideal universe virtue would be rewarded with an appropriate amount of happiness. In this case 'virtue combined with an appropriate amount of happiness' is intrinsically good; happiness by itself is not intrinsically good.

It is possible that things of intrinsic value may be either elementary and incapable of further analysis or complex wholes that can be analysed. In the example which we have just given, Sidgwick held that the only thing which is of intrinsic value is the elementary process of pleasant affection. It is a more common view that most things of intrinsic value are complex in structure, and Dr. Moore considers that they are complex structures of a special kind which he calls 'organic wholes'. Incidentally, some thinkers even consider that the pleasure which is intrinsically valuable is a complex whole; for it contains at least the elements of pleasant affective quality and consciousness. (Others deny the possibility of this analysis holding that the consciousness and the pleasantness are identical.) There is, however, here a strong argument against the view that a simple abstract quality like pleasantness is intrinsically valuable. It is in the last resort only by a direct experience or intuition that we know whether a thing has intrinsic value or not. All attempts to establish the value of a thing by reasoning can only show that it is extrinsically valuable in relation to, or as a means to, other things mentioned in the argument. We can never experience abstract processes by themselves; we cannot for example have pleasantness alone in our minds, and so we never can know directly that it would still have value, if it were to exist quite by itself. Many people would carry this argument further and say that in those conditions where pleasantness is most alone, because the experience has lost its other elements of value as in the drunkard's pleasant stupor or the drug addict's pleasant somnolence, the value of the experience largely disappears in spite of the fact that the pleasantness

still remains. Intuition can at most tell us that intrinsically valuable things have pleasantness as one among their characteristics.

The view that intrinsically good objects are organic wholes has been expounded by Dr. G. E. Moore in his *Principia Ethica.*[1] The conception of an organic whole is undoubtedly derived from that of a living organism like an animal, where the parts of the body work together in close relations to one another. It is used also for the unity of a work of art, like a great picture, where there is an analogous closeness of relation among the parts. The whole of an organic unity is in some sense more than the sum of its parts. Various attempts to express this have been made in such ways as 'The parts of an organic whole are causally dependent on one another', or 'The parts would not be what they are except for the existence of the whole'. As Dr. Moore points out, these are not very intelligible explanations and it is doubtful if they are true of any real whole. All that they express is the closeness of the relations of the parts to the whole. Dr. Moore himself explains an organic whole in terms of value, for he defines it as a whole 'where the value of the whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts'. This is the case with living organisms; the limbs and organs of the body taken separately have very small values, so that, if these were merely added together, they would come to nothing like the value of [illegible] living body. This is also the case with a work of art; the [illegible]ours in a picture by Rembrandt are separately of little value, as is suggested by the small price the painter would have to give the merchant for them; but the value of the picture as a whole is very great indeed. An interesting consequence is that even if we are convinced by introspection that one part makes a special contribution to the value of the whole, the mere increasing of that contribution need not add to the value of the whole. A particular patch of colour may be the crowning beauty of a picture, but the spreading of that colour over a larger area is more likely to detract from than add to the beauty of the picture as a whole. Dr. Moore, probably because of his metaphysical theory, ignores another fact about an organic whole; each part may have a value of

[1] Moore: *Principia Ethica,* Ch. I.d, §§xviii–xx.

its own, and that value may be affected by its place in the whole. The patch of colour may be a thing of great beauty in itself, but its beauty will be affected by its relation to the other colours in the picture. We may doubt whether biologists would be ready to accept Dr. Moore's definition of an organic whole in terms of value; they certainly use similar conceptions without bringing in the notion of value at all. Another possible definition would be that the various parts co-operate in the purpose of the whole, but this definition again would have metaphysical implications of a purpose either immanent in the organic whole itself or in the mind of its creator, which a scientist might not be ready to accept. Even if we think that Dr. Moore is not giving the strict connotation of the term 'organic whole' in his definition, and even if we hold that there are other true things that can be said about it, we must still admit that what he has said about the value of the whole in relation to the value of its parts is substantially true, although it may not serve as a definition.

It certainly is the case that many of the things to which good men aspire are complex, and some of them at any rate seem to be organic wholes in Dr. Moore's sense of that term. In an experience like the enjoyment of beauty, many different elements, subjective and objective, are combined in an experience which is a unity. For instance, understanding is probably one element in the enjoyment of beauty, and yet if it becomes too prominent, and critical analysis occupies the mind, the enjoyment is lessened rather than increased. We may ask whether there are elements common to all the 'worthy objects of admiration' which are intrinsically valuable and may be regarded as organic wholes, and we may be told in reply that consciousness is one such element and pleasantness is another such element. In our experience intrinsically good things imply consciousness and pleasantness; but these alone would not be sufficient to distinguish intrinsically good wholes from other organic unities which are not intrinsically good. An experience like malice, which is intrinsically bad, contains both consciousness and pleasantness and, as we have seen, increasing pleasantness here means increasing badness. To go back to our analogy with a picture, while it is true that in every intrinsically good whole, pleasantness is

present as an element (and this is the truth emphasized by hedonism), it does not follow that the mere increasing of the amount of pleasantness in an experience would add to its value, any more than the increase of one colour would add to the value of a picture. Introspection confirms this and shows us that there can be too much pleasantness in some experiences and this may mean a decrease in their value. Some of the more mawkish mystics seem to have a morally inferior experience of communion with God because of its overwhelming pleasantness in which they revel. Even the Epicureans sometimes realized that positive pleasure had to be kept in a secondary place in the good life. Kant was nearest the mark when he talked of an appropriate amount of happiness in a complete good.

§3. *Intrinsically Good Things as the Aim of Moral Action*

What things are intrinsically good, and which of them are distinctively moral goods? In his *Principia Ethica* Dr. Moore mentions the enjoyment of beautiful objects and the pleasure of human intercourse.[1] There is no doubt but that these are experiences which would be good even if they were to exist quite alone, but there are other experiences also, such as communion with God, the comprehension of truth, the experience of artistic creativeness or even the enjoyment of satisfying our bodily appetites, which have an equal claim to the rank of intrinsic goods with those mentioned by Dr. Moore. It would be better that the enjoyment of the gourmand should exist by itself than that nothing should exist at all. If pleasantness were to exist alone (although we have no reason to think that it can exist alone), it would be an intrinsic good; its existence would be better than its non-existence.

We have seen that there may be intrinsically good things which cannot be affected by human endeavour at all (the starry heavens, for example, apart from a human or any other spectator), and these cannot be moral goods. Kant explicitly maintained that the intrinsic goodness of virtue along with the appropriate amount of happiness could only in its happiness aspect be brought about by God or some

[1] Moore: *Principia Ethica*, Ch. 6, §cxiii.

similar cosmic provider, and not by human arrangement. Even most of the intrinsic goods which were mentioned in our last paragraph are also dependent to a large extent, although not entirely, on other conditions than the voluntary actions of human agents. The enjoyment of beautiful objects depends on the natural endowment of the agent and on the existence of such objects in the natural world, as well as on the deliberate cultivation of taste. The pleasure of human intercourse depends partly on the natural endowments of those who enjoy the intercourse, for example ability to speak, and partly on the will of our companions as well as our own; friendship that is merely willed by one party is no real friendship at all. Similarly communion with God, comprehension of truth and conscious creativeness depend partly on the enjoyer's natural endowments, and partly on the objects towards which the enjoyment is directed, the nature of God, the complexities of nature and the materials used in art. Pleasantness itself has long been recognized as depending on other conditions as well as the will of the agent, such as good health and outward circumstances. This indicates one of the great practical difficulties of a teleological theory of ethics. There is never any complete certainty that the end sought will be attained by our human strivings to attain it, so varied are the outside conditions concerned. The most we can say is that in the light of human experience such and such an action is likely to or has a tendency to produce a certain good. There are no absolutely universal rules in a teleological theory of ethics; our rules must take the form, 'This action is probably right because in many cases in our experience it has produced a certain result.'

Another question is, 'Which of these intrinsic goods is most worth attaining?' Can we say of any one of them that it is intrinsically better than the others? We had to ask a similar question with regard to the end as perfection, and then we were only able to give it a very limited answer. To begin with it can be said definitely that objects of admiration rank more highly than objects of satisfaction. Intrinsic goods which arouse the special feeling state that we call admiration are intrinsically better than those which cause mere satisfaction. Indeed, we have gone so far as to suggest that

objects of satisfaction as such, while they are certainly good in the broad sense of good used for all objects of value in axiology, are not moral goods at all. It may seem evident that we make moral judgements about actions leading merely to the satisfaction of our appetites, eating and drinking for example, but it is not as objects of satisfaction that we judge them in ethics. It is as an object of satisfaction that a good wine is judged in axiology as better than an ordinary wine. What then of Sir David Ross's 'worthy or fit objects of satisfaction'? In our opinion these are objects of our moral judgement, not as objects of satisfaction, but as worthy objects of admiration. We have then confined our moral goods to objects of admiration but, apart from the obvious naturalistic fallacy of defining good things in terms of the feeling state of admiration, it is notorious that we often admire the wrong things. The intrinsic goods that are the aims of right or good actions are *worthy* objects of admiration. This word 'worthy' is difficult to define. One suggestion is that it can only be defined in connexion with the deontological notion of rightness which we shall consider in the last section of this chapter. The intuitionists hold that it is only by a direct intuition that we can say that intrinsically good things are morally worthy of admiration and attainment. The theory suggested, admittedly an inchoate and undeveloped theory, in this introduction, suggests that our aiming at certain goods rather than others is in some way in accordance with the 'laws of nature'.

One thing we can say about those moral goods which are worthy objects of admiration. The actions leading to them must have the characteristics of moral fittingness and obligatoriness which were mentioned in Chapter IV, and which are easier to explain on a deontological theory of ethics. Some account can be given, however, of 'obligatoriness' in a teleological theory. Various intrinsically good things have the power of casting a spell on certain individuals so that they feel constrained to give their lives to the pursuit of these things. The saints strive in this way for communion with God, the philosophers and the men of science for the comprehension of truth, the artists for the creation of new objects of beauty, and 'in wider commonalty spread', there is an

urge towards the enjoyment of beauty and human fellowship although in these cases the peculiar sense of obligatoriness is often lacking. The saint feels that he *ought* to seek communion with God, but the ordinary man hardly feels that in the same way he ought to seek intercourse with his neighbours or enjoyment of beauty. These are often sought merely as objects of satisfaction, but when they are not regarded as satisfying, the 'ought' feeling is present; we talk of a 'duty call', when the social intercourse is not one that we expect to find satisfying, and art galleries or concert halls may be visited from a sense of duty. It is not, however, about moral goods as the aims of right actions that we have the strongest sense of obligation. Most men feel an obligatoriness about actions like truth-speaking and honesty in their dealings which they do not feel about the goods to which these actions may admittedly lead. Which of the hedonists in actual life feels with the same obligatoriness that he ought to seek pleasure as he feels that he ought to speak the truth? While there is a certain plausibility in supposing that the actions which are commonly regarded as good or right do lead to pleasure, and perhaps in a special way to pleasant human intercourse, many seem to have nothing to do with most of the other ends which we have cited as possible cases of moral intrinsic goods. It is only in an indirect way that honesty in action can lead to the comprehension of truth or to the creation of beautiful objects, and an honesty that had merely such indirect ends in view would hardly appear to be a worthy object of admiration. Indeed we may question the view that these goods are primarily moral goods at all; what is most important morally is not that we aim at them but the use that we make of them when we attain them.

In a theory of the type of Rashdall's 'Ideal Utilitarianism'[1] an attempt is made to arrange the intrinsic goods at which a man ought to aim in a system, and Rashdall gave due place to the happiness which utilitarians regarded as the sole moral end, but he reserved the supreme place for what he called virtue and what will be called in the next section 'good character'. Near to virtue were such goods as intellectual activity and the appreciation of beauty, and pleasure came

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I, 184–221.

low in the scale of goods, even lower than some other relatively simple feeling states, like compassion and sympathy. Rashdall did not discuss a unifying principle among such goods and his only method of judging whether a particular thing was to be regarded as a moral good was by intuition in the case of each particular good separately. The point in which Rashdall retained his utilitarianism is that his theory is out and out teleological. The religious man, however, has claimed in all ages that communion with God is the highest of goods. Aristotle and other philosophers have held that the contemplative life of the philosopher is the highest life so that for them comprehension of truth would either take the place of communion with God or share the highest place with that communion, which is itself a kind of contemplation. If Professor Reid and M. Berdyaev are right in holding that morality is essentially creative, the highest goods are the products of creative art in the widest sense of the word. Most people would agree that the goods we have mentioned rank higher than the pleasures of human intercourse and enjoyment of beauty, and these in turn rank higher than those pleasures, such as the pleasures of the appetites, which are largely matters of satisfaction rather than of admiration. Mere pleasantness by itself would probably come very low on the scale, although its presence as an accompaniment or constituent of all the higher values makes this exceedingly difficult to judge by way of introspection. A similar difficulty appears when we try to decide whether the consciousness of freedom is itself an intrinsic good. It occurs as a constituent or perhaps an accompaniment of all the higher goods; and it never occurs by itself for freedom is always freedom to perform some concrete activity, either mental or physical. If freedom is an intrinsic good, it is difficult to tell its place in the scale of intrinsic goods. Indeed it is doubtful whether such a scale can be made at all, for the particular intrinsic goods which an individual ought to seek surely depend on his station and its duties. The comprehension of truth obviously takes a higher place for the philosopher and the scientist than it does for the artist. It is more important for the man of affairs to seek the pleasures of human intercourse than for either philosopher or artist, although this may be as an instrumental

and not always an intrinsic good for him. Most young Indians to-day hold that in their particular station and circumstances freedom ought to take a higher place in their scale of goods than it would in a free country of long standing. What we can say about all these intrinsic moral goods is that they are worth achieving by any good man so far as the opportunities of his life offer. The best man may achieve them all to some degree but the degree to which he will achieve one rather than another will depend on his station and its duties.

§4. *Good Character as the Moral End*

In our list of moral goods, which are intrinsically good and worthy objects of admiration, we have deliberately left out one which is by many moralists regarded as the most important of all—the enjoyment of a good character; its importance justifies a separate section dealing with it. Some moralists confine the term 'moral good' to good character and the actions leading to it. It certainly seems in accordance with our common intuitions to hold that a perfect character or a virtuous human personality is the highest among moral goods, but it is exceedingly difficult to give any satisfactory meaning to these terms on a purely teleological theory of ethics. To make a good character merely one that produces right actions and right actions merely those that lead to a good character is simply arguing in a circle, and to confine right actions to those leading to other intrinsic goods than a good character is to leave out to a great extent such common actions as speaking the truth and dealing honestly, and to fail to explain the obligatoriness of right actions in any reasonable way. The easiest way of giving good character its place, perhaps its unique place, among moral goods is to bring in a deontological view of ethics, which holds that right actions or morally good actions are themselves intrinsically good; they are not right merely because they are means to some end. To accept the deontological view by itself would be to deny moral but not axiological value to all the intrinsic goods which have been mentioned in the last section, and that seems too great a demand. But deontologists can reasonably maintain that right actions do as a matter of fact lead to these intrinsically good consequences although they may deny

that it is this conduciveness to good consequences which makes them good. We must admit that most of the actions which deontologists call right or morally good have effects of two kinds. (a) They produce consequences which are intrinsically good such as human fellowship or pleasure. The strict deontologist holds that the action would still be right even if it were not to produce the intrinsically good consequence, and he has the support of the common man in this view. Honesty may be generally the best policy in the sense that it produces the best possible consequences, but a man is still right to be honest in cases where he knows quite well that in his particular circumstances his honest action is to have an unfortunate result. Most people would agree, on the other hand, that of two actions equally right in themselves from the point of view of pure deontology it would be always better to choose the one with the intrinsically better consequences. There is, however, an important distinction here between consequences that are objects of satisfaction and those that are objects of admiration. If I say that it is good for me to eat a dish I like rather than one I dislike, it being understood that for the deontologist both are equally right, I am using the word good in a merely axiological way. The one dish is more satisfying than the other. If however it is equally right for me to give my neighbour one of two dishes and I take the trouble to find out which will give him the greater pleasure, my action has become in some small way a w[illegible]y object of admiration, and to give him the extra pleasure is morally good. This distinction probably holds of other intrinsically good consequences as well as pleasure, but hardly to the same degree. A right action which leads to a greater creativeness on the part of my neighbour is morally better than one which leads to my own greater creativeness. Here, however, we may be judging by a purely teleological standard.

(b) The other set of effects which right actions have, consists of effects on the character of the agent, and these are the effects emphasized by the standard as perfection. Kant held that 'a man is an end in himself', and many would hold that 'a sweet and virtuous soul' is the finest achievement of the moral life. Admittedly this is not an easy standard to

deal with for it is difficult to know what a character or a self or a personality really is, and a great many philosophers hold that they are simply hypothetical entities of the status of the electron or the gene. If we assert that a good character is simply a shorthand phrase for the kind of man who normally does right actions, we are making the good character which we have identified with the man merely a means to the performance of right actions; and while many thinkers hold that good actions and good character are the two moral intrinsic goods, most of them maintain that good character takes an even higher place than good actions. If actions are good in themselves, as the deontologists say, then a good character has certainly instrumental value, but it has also, according to the view of this section, an intrinsic value. This view has some interesting implications. It is difficult to believe that a human being can be of intrinsic value, unless he is immortal, for the word 'intrinsic' would exclude the value of his influence, his works and the children that he produces. This is one of the few ethical theories that would demand strongly the immortality of the soul, which Kant held to be a postulate of ethics. This view also suggests the desirability of there being an infinite variety of unique personalities, as we have already suggested in our discussion of creative morality. If there were millions of perfect personalities, all identical with one another, it is difficult to believe that each individual would have much intrinsic value; there would be plenty others to take his place. According to this view it is not what a man does but what he is that matters most for morality, although here there is a danger of saying about an abstraction what is true only of the concrete whole; it may not be possible to separate a man's actions from his personality.

Many people, who admit the intrinsic value of human personality, and hold that it is of higher value than the other intrinsically good things mentioned in this chapter, still hesitate to say that the conscious aim of an individual ought to be the attainment of a perfect personality, or the realization of his 'true self' or the development of his own character. They know from experience that right actions do lead to such an end; indeed the doing of right actions is the only way of attaining it. It seems self-evident to them, however, that the

motive in a right action is always directed to some other end than the agent's own benefit, most commonly to the benefit of one or more of his fellow-men, and this is true even if the benefit is thought of in terms of such a lofty conception as perfection. There is even a suggestion of egotism about Kant's precept that we ought to aim at our own perfection, and at other people's happiness. It puts a value on his own self that the good man is reluctant to put. There is in fact a paradox of perfectionism as well as a paradox of hedonism; the man who aims at his own perfection is less likely to attain it than the man who gives his life to the service of others. There are two possible ways out of this difficulty for the ethical theorist. (a) It may be that we have here reached the limits of morality. Morality that bids us seek our own perfection has something self-contradictory about it, and religion is required in order to indicate that in humble walking with God a man's own perfection is merely a part of something infinitely greater. (b) It may be that we are again approaching one of nature's fundamental laws, that the sacrifice of his own good by an agent is in one respect always the 'fitting' action. It is part of the ultimate nature of things that it should be so, and that is all we can say about it.

From this discussion it appears that there are worthy objects of admiration, intrinsically good things, which men ought to seek. Some of them are worthy to seek for ourselves or for others, and the most important of these is a perfected character although there are difficulties in consciously aiming at this for ourselves because of what we have called the paradox of perfectionism. Good things, which are merely objects of satisfaction are not, as such, things which men ought to seek for themselves, but to seek them for others seems to be intrinsically good and a worthy object of admiration. Yet even in our study of teleology it has become clear that conduciveness to an end of intrinsic value is not the only way in which an action can be right. To understand even in a partial way the idea of a good character it is necessary to suppose that, in some sense, right actions have value in themselves, and this is the deontological view of ethics. We have seen, too, that the location of an intrinsic good, which has no relevance for axiology, seems to be relevant for ethics.

Another man's intrinsically good experiences are, other things being equal, to be preferred morally to our own.

§5. *Right Actions as Intrinsically Good*

One difficulty of the teleological view is that because of it there may be a temptation to think that the end justifies the means. If right actions are merely right because of the consequences to which they lead, it is difficult to explain the common experience of actions being wrong, although the agent has admittedly some good end in view. The teleologist can only explain their wrongness by pointing out that as a matter of fact the action in question leads to some other bad end. Even in the case of an action done as a means to an end, we must judge its rightness not merely in terms of its conduciveness to the end but in its fittingness to our whole situation at the time.

The strict deontological view holds that it is the action itself and not its consequences which are intrinsically right or wrong. Common opinion holds with assurance that an action like speaking the truth is right, and demands that justice be done, even though the heavens may fall in consequence. The French general who remarked on the charge of the Light Brigade 'It is magnificent but it is not war', was indicating that the charge had a value, either moral or æsthetic, but it had no instrumental value for winning a victory. There is a danger in introducing the concept of *intrinsic* value here; although the right action may not be a means to an end, it is hardly the case that the action would be right if it were to exist quite alone. An action is right in a particular situation, and this is why the legalists in morality have failed to deal with 'exceptional cases'. It is true that in the majority of cases truth-speaking may be the right action, apart from its consequences, but it is conceivable that there are cases where it may not be so.

Here again what is good is not an abstraction but a concrete whole. It is of the action as a whole that rightness or goodness can be predicated, not of one partial aspect of it. When we say that it is right to speak the truth we do not indicate merely the uttering of the words; no one imagines that there is intrinsic goodness in the mere making of unmusical sounds;

we mean that the words are uttered with the intention of conveying true information to someone, and often imply that this information has actually been conveyed. If an Englishman speaks in Greek to a person who knows no Greek, so that the effect of true information being received does not take place, the statement is true, but there is no intrinsic goodness in the Englishman speaking the truth in this unusual way. A good deal of the criticism levelled against deontological theories ignores the fact that an action includes to some extent its motive, its intention and even its consequences. When a deontologist says that truth-speaking is right he is certainly ignoring the more remote consequences such as the pleasure or the pain that the right action causes, and it is in doing so that he differs from the teleologist. Every deontologist must admit that truth spoken from a sense of duty is intrinsically better than truth spoken from a feeling of malice; the whole action is to be considered and not merely the outward movement of the body. It is practically very difficult to say how far mental antecedents and external consequences form part of an action, but to some extent they certainly do. In making moral judgements we sometimes include more and sometimes less, just to the degree that we require to make the particular moral judgement. This leaves the deontological judgement somewhat vague at least in theory as compared with the teleological judgement which theoretically includes all consequences of a specified kind, but it is a vagueness th[illegible] accordance with common usage. The rightness of an act[illegible] has indeed the capacity of spreading itself over the system to which it belongs. Just as teleologists consider that a good end is the dominating factor in a system of actions, giving them all a share of its goodness, so deontologists may hold that an outstandingly good action does, even although it is only a means, colour with rightness or goodness the whole system to which it belongs. The heroism of a soldier fighting in a bad cause may give a moral worth to his military service that the bad end could never give.

In deontology, the judgement on the rightness of an action is a matter of direct intuition, just as in teleology the judgement on the intrinsic goodness of an end is a matter of direct intuition. An action like speaking the truth, apart from its

remoter consequences, is seen intuitively to be good, just as the enjoyment of beauty is seen to be an intrinsically good experience. Indeed for many people this is the characteristically moral intuition for it includes in itself these elements of fittingness and obligatoriness which seem essential elements in our ethical judgements in a way that no intuition of an intrinsically good *end* does. When we say that it is right to speak the truth we see that it is the suitable thing or, as we say, the 'right' thing to do in the situation, and we feel it obligatory on ourselves to do it. We may admit both types of moral judgement. Some actions are right in themselves; this is almost always the case with truthful, honest or just actions. Other actions are right because of the consequences to which they lead, such as the preparation of an entertainment to give our neighbours pleasure; apart from its setting out to please our neighbours there is nothing right about it. There may be situations where, of two alternative actions, one appears right in itself and the other appears right because of the consequences it will bring about, and in such a case intuition appears to be our only guide. Such a case would be that in which we tell a lie to save the life of a child. Unless morality is to be ultimately subjective and that is a view which we rejected earlier in our discussion, we must believe that this intuition, like every other genuine moral intuition, is causing us to see, however dimly and disconnectedly, a moral law of nature; in this particular case it may be the sacrificing of the agent's good to the good of others. We know [illegible] little of these ultimate moral relations of the universe to be sure that they form a coherent system; it may be a part of our religious or metaphysical faith that they do.

Chapter XIII

THEORY AND PRACTICE

§1. *The Purpose of Ethical Study*

There are three chief views as to the purpose of studying ethics. (a) Many thinkers maintain that ethics is a purely theoretical study, seeking to understand the nature of morality, but with no purpose of having any effect whatever on the conduct of the man who studies it. F. H. Bradley, for example, denied the possibility of ethics providing 'an universal rule and canon for every possible case', and he held that casuistry, which is the attempt to apply ethical principles to the cases of doubt in our practical experience, is 'unlovely in life and more unpleasant in decay, from which I myself should be loath to divide it'.[1] (b) Other thinkers hold that the chief purpose of ethics is to influence our actual conduct. Dr. G. E. Moore calls casuistry 'the goal of ethical investigation',[2] and holds that the aim of ethics is to apply its principles in such a way as to guide men in the art of living. (c) Other thinkers, and probably they form the largest group, hold that, while ethics is primarily a theoretical subject which is concerned with discovering the truth about moral matters, there must be in the course of ethical investigation a constant criticism of existing standards of morality, so that ethics becomes a practical subject almost in spite of itself. Those who take the first view have been influenced by the disrepute into which casuistry has fallen, as Bradley's strong condemnation makes evident. They have also been affected by a common opinion that ethical theory makes no great difference to practice. As Mackenzie put it, 'If one set of people were to take Kant for their guide, another set J. S. Mill, another T. H. Green, another Dr. G. E. Moore, and, if each set

[1] F. H. Bradley: *Principles of Logic*, Vol. 1, p. 269.

[2] G. E. Moore: *Principia Ethica*, Ch. 1, §iv.

interpreted their respective guides with care, it may be doubted whether they would find themselves in substantial disagreement on purely moral issues.'[1] We shall begin this chapter with a discussion of casuistry, as a thinker's attitude to casuistry will determine his whole view on the relation of theory to practice.

§2. *Casuistry.*

It was stated in our first chapter that casuistry is a legitimate but an extremely difficult science. It is a reasonable extension of the province of ethics to examine how its principles work out in the actual circumstances of the moral life. There is indeed an advantage to the purely theoretical study of ethics in examining such applications. The engineer in applying to actual materials—steel, concrete and the rest—the principles of dynamics, which he has studied in his theoretical text-books, is likely enough to find defects in the formulation of these principles, and may be led to new theoretical discoveries. Similarly the moralist, in applying his standards to actual cases, may find that these standards lead to contradictions, which suggest a revision in his statement of the moral standards. The most common objection to a general or dogmatic intuitionism like that described by Sidgwick[2] has been that the rules discovered by intuition contradict one another in actual life; and this leads a moralist to reconsider and revise his theory. If ethical principles are not constantly checked up by seeing how they work in practice, the whole subject will become a philosopher's fantasy away altogether from the lives of good and bad men.

The fact that casuistry was misused at one period of history is no argument against it, any more than it is an argument against the discoveries of science to say that they have been misused for purposes of human slaughter. The Jesuits in the post-Reformation period on some occasions used arguments of casuistry to defend conduct that appears wrong to the intuitions of common sense. As a matter of fact a great many of the objections that have been made to the 'casuistry' of

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics* (6th Edition), p. 239.

[2] Sidgwick: *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. III.

the Jesuits are really objections to the doctrine of 'probabilism' which they used in their moral arguments. Probabilism held that an action could be justified by the production of the opinion of one Christian doctor in its favour. 'In matters of conscience on which there is some disagreement among authorities it is lawful to follow any course in support of which the authority of a recognized doctor of the Church can be cited.'[1] The introduction of such an arbitrary standard is not an essential part of casuistry; indeed, a valid casuistry would accept its standards only from an established system of ethics.

There are certainly objections to casuistry. The subtleties and sophistries into which the Jesuits are alleged to have fallen are to some extent an inevitable consequence of the nature of casuistry itself. In the moral life it is better to direct our attention to the broad principles of morality and to let the details look after themselves. The man who is fussing all the time about insignificant details in matters of honesty is not likely to be as good a man as the man who is so strong in principles of integrity and generosity that he does not need to worry about the honesty of particular transactions. The latter in most cases becomes so sensitive to the right thing in matters of honesty that he knows directly what to do with no casuistical calculation. It may be suggested that the chief practical value of the study of theoretical ethics is that it saves a man from the casuistical details which trouble conscientious people, by giving him a broad outlook which causes him to look beyond petty rules to far-reaching ideals and universal principles. If these are in his mind he is more likely to do the right thing almost unconsciously in a particular situation. Casuists must certainly be careful not to emphasize so much the circumstances of the particular case of conscience as to divert attention from the moral principles involved. Their true business—and it is an extremely difficult business—is to make the larger moral principles stand out clearly from the mass of complex details in the actual situation with which they are concerned.

Other objections which have been made to casuistry as a science are the following. (a) Moral situations are so complex

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary.*

that they cannot be analysed. This is equal to the assertion that casuistry is very difficult, but other sciences, medicine for example, do not give up in despair because they are confronted with situations that are extremely complicated. (b) It is not scientific to deal with particular cases; science deals with universals. The answer to this objection is that casuists themselves have always realized that they are dealing with *classes* of cases. (c) If casuists are dealing with classes of cases they cannot deal with particular moral cases, each of which is unique and does not repeat itself. This may have some measure of truth, but the casuists would maintain that actions may so resemble one another in one particular respect that they can be considered under one rule. The general intuitions of common-sense morality certainly imply that actions are sufficiently like one another to be so classified as, for example, when it is held that all lying is wrong. (d) Common sense is as likely to be right as a casuistical argument in discovering the rightness or wrongness of an action in a particular situation. This criticism denies that experience improves the capacity for making judgements, a view that is accepted without question in most spheres of life; the casuist is the man experienced in deciding the rightness or wrongness of actions. (e) The casuist requires to know not only the principles of ethics, but the details of the sphere of life in which an action takes place; for example, in judging the rightness of an airman engaging 'in low flying' he needs to know the technical details of aviation. Here again the objection states that casuistry is extremely difficult, not that it is impossible. (f) The casuist takes a legal view of morality and tends to ignore the freedom and creativeness which characterize the higher forms of morality. This is really another form of the general objection made in the last paragraph, which appears to be the one valid objection against casuistry.

There will always be some thinkers who find their chief interest in purely theoretical ethics, just as there are chemists who find their chief interest in purely theoretical chemistry. There will be other thinkers who find their chief interest in the concrete applications of ethical principles in practical life, just as there are chemists whose chief interest is in the

applications of their science and the new inventions made through them. The danger of the theorist is that of making theories which are not true to the facts; the danger of the practical man is that of losing sight of the principles involved, in attending to the complexities of the details; but both have a useful service to render in any science. In the history of philosophy many of the most able theorists, such as Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, Bentham and J. S. Mill, have had a deep interest in the practical applications of ethics, and have regarded ethics as a practical subject.

§3. *The Influence of Ethical Theory on Practice—The Evidence of Experience*

We must now attempt to consider Mackenzie's suggestion that ethical theories have no effect on particular moral decisions in practice. This is a difficult question to study for often we cannot tell whether practice has influenced theory or theory has influenced practice. The moral theorist, as we suggested in our first chapter, does not begin with abstract principles from which he deduces a theory. He begins with the common moral ideas of his time and place, which he examines, modifies in accordance with principles of consistency and his own intuitions (which are also likely to be affected by the moral atmosphere surrounding him), and arranges in a consistent system. To put it in another way, he does not impose n[illegible] moral standards on existing moral opinions, but he extracts these moral standards from existing moral opinions, criticizing and modifying them in the process. The circumstances of his age and country are likely to influence not only the theories of the moralist but the common moral opinions with which he begins. The discoveries about biological evolution and the rapid industrialization of Western Europe influenced both the common views of Victorian England on moral matters and also the systematic theory of Herbert Spencer. The moralist is in great measure the child of his own age, sometimes a docile child like John Stuart Mill sometimes a rebellious child like Carlyle, but still deeply affected by the circumstances and prevailing moral opinions of his times.

One thing is certain, and that is that moral practice is always influenced by more potent factors than moral theory. Custom, as expressed in institutions and in public opinion, is perhaps the most powerful influence. The individual's own intuitions, by which (according to the theory suggested in this book) he sees the natural fittingnesses of things or the unique moral laws of nature so far as these are relevant to a particular case, are more powerful guides to conduct than the theories of the philosophers. And, as we shall see in a later section of this chapter, there are 'sanctions', rewards and punishments which do as a matter of fact influence people in their conduct, whether it is or is not morally desirable that they should do so.

When we have allowed for all these admittedly potent factors we can still maintain that ethical theory does have a bearing on ethical practice. The theory of the utilitarians was in part the product of an age in which new inventions and particularly new means of transport made the production of universal happiness a more attainable ideal, but the theory itself had in turn a great influence on the movements for social reform, for the spread of education and for the development of the understanding of economic laws in which the utilitarian leaders themselves took such a large share. Even in Bentham's own life his theory had practical effects in his schemes for education, such as the founding of University College, London, and in his plans for international peace. (He is said to have invented the word 'internationa[illegible]!) The utilitarians had certainly an advantage over most ethical schools in the matter of affecting practice; they had a slogan which the ordinary man thought that he understood: 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'; and a slogan influences most men far more than abstract speculation. The evolutionary view, to some extent in its abstract Hegelian form through Karl Marx, but more commonly in the concrete biological form taught by Spencer (which again seemed comprehensible to ordinary people), is perhaps still exerting a pernicious influence in popular pseudo-scientific writings which take for granted that moral progress is inevitable, and so does not demand serious effort or self-sacrificing zeal. The evolutionary theory of ethics is one of the intellectual

factors, along with others both intellectual and non-intellectual, that have produced a slackening of moral effort in our own age.

In our consideration of Spencer's theory we saw that, if the moral end is the preservation of life in the individual or in the race, the consequence follows that the rules of eugenics are the most important among the rules of ethics. As a matter of fact eugenics, which claims to be a practical as well as a theoretical science, did arise out of the evolutionary outlook of the latter part of the nineteenth century, and it certainly has had some influence on morality. In discussing to-day whether divorce is ever morally justified, some place would certainly be given to arguments from eugenics, such as the desirability for the future of the race of permitting divorce in order to prevent the birth of undesirable offspring. Ethical theories do have a definite effect on moral practice, although often it takes place a long time after the theory itself is given up by most competent moralists, because it has its influence through its popular interpreters whose ethical theories tend to be out of date.

§4. *The Authority of the Moral Standard*

The way in which a moral theory affects the practical life depends greatly on the nature of its authority. The various theories which regard a moral law as analogous to a political law tend to find that authority where a political law finds its authority, chiefly in the punishments that are inflicted on the breaker of the law. The authority of a political law, however, is by no means confined to the penalties attached to its violation. Loyalty to the government or devotion to the person of a ruler will lead subjects to obey a political law. In most countries, where there is any measure of political freedom, subjects are reluctant to obey laws unless they see the reason for obeying them or the good to be brought about by obeying them. A law that seems unreasonable to the common sense of the subjects will be evaded, however painful the penalties for its discovered violation may be. We shall find that this is also the case with moral laws.

The view that the authority of the moral law is maintained

by means of penalties and rewards is found in the utilitarian doctrine of sanctions.[1] A sanction is in legal language what gives force to the laws of a state. Most commonly it is the punishment attached to their violation, but the rewards or decorations given by states for conduct of which the rulers approve are also sanctions. It was by means of this doctrine of sanctions that the utilitarians managed to combine their psychological hedonism with a universalistic ethical hedonism that was really inconsistent with it. The rewards obtained from seeking the happiness of others and the pains suffered from a failure to do so are such that the intelligent man sees that utilitarian conduct is actually the way in which he obtains his own pleasure which, according to psychological hedonism, he is always naturally seeking. Bentham distinguishes the final cause of human action, which is the general happiness, from the efficient cause at work in each individual mind, which is the anticipation of one's own personal pleasure. Bentham held that there are four kinds of sanctions, which make it to our interest to seek the good of others and so to do right actions. (a) There are *physical* sanctions; as a general tendency right actions lead to physical health and the feeling of well-being, while wrong actions, like drunkenness and debauchery, lead ultimately to physical pain. (b) There are *political* sanctions; in most countries the political laws lead to the punishment of such evil actions as theft and murder. (c) There are *social* sanctions; public opinion gives praise and consequent happiness to the benevolent man while it condemns and ostracizes the miser. (d) There are *religious* sanctions; even in this life good men have found that good actions give them a consciousness of God's approval and a consequent happiness, although it is doubtful whether the bad suffer a corresponding misery. It is, however, in the promise of a life beyond death where the good will be rewarded by a superlative happiness and the bad punished with an excess of pain that religious sanctions have chiefly operated. Mill added to Bentham's four sanctions a fifth sanction, 'the internal sanction of conscience', the pleasure that comes from a sense of duty well done, and the pain that comes from remorse of conscience.

[1] Bentham: *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 3.

If we were engaged in a descriptive science it would be relevant to say that such sanctions have actually had a tendency to keep people from certain forms of evil and to encourage them in certain forms of good. Many people have had the experience that a physical pain or the realization of marked social disapproval has served to them as a warning that they have fallen into a bad habit, and has aroused them to start on a better course. As a matter of fact pain is nature's danger signal in all sentient creatures; and it still serves as a warning at the higher moral levels, and moralists have no reason to despise this provision of nature. Perhaps the social sanction has been the most effective of all the sanctions. At the level of custom the fear of the disapproval of others keeps an individual doing things of which he himself may not see the value, and prevents him from doing what public opinion forbids. The statesman makes a full use of social sanctions in order to get people to do what the government wants. He may use the cruder physical sanctions of fines and imprisonment, but a public opinion managed by skilful propaganda is a far more powerful influence on the conduct of the masses. It is just this fact, that the statesman with sufficient power can misdirect both social and political sanctions, that limits their value in the moral life. The conduct supported by the sanctions in a particular age and country need not be morally good. It has been only too easy for governments to make agreeable to their citizens types of conduct which have led to aggression against other states, war and oppression.

It is sometimes maintained that the pleasures and pains of conscience differ from the other sanctions in being directly proportional to the actual goodness and badness of the actions concerned. There is, however, no guarantee of this; it is possible for conscience to be misguided or perverted, even to become the 'conscience of an ass', and in this case its pleasures and pains will no longer be indicators of actual goodness and badness, even if they originally were. There is too a very familiar phenomenon called 'quasi-conscience', where a remorse is felt for actions that are not morally wrong, although they may meet with social disapproval. The shame of having said something ridiculous and so having, as we

think, aroused the scorn of our companions, is very like the shame that we feel in doing a bad action.

Whatever the authority given by sanctions, and it is by no means an unvarying authority, it is certain that the moral law has more authority than that given by the pleasures obtained from obeying it and the pains suffered in violating it. Many people consider that the man who obeys the moral law simply because of the sanctions is not being really moral at all. They hold that if conduct like lying were by the arrangement, for example, of some all-powerful dictator to lead to pleasant consequences and the avoiding of pains, the liar would still be under the authority of the moral law which bids him speak the truth. This suggests the view that the moral law has its authority because it arouses in us a feeling of awe or reverence, something like Kant's 'achtung', closely akin to the feeling for the supernatural that Otto calls the sense of the 'numinous'. It is a crude mistake to suppose that this is a mere primitive terror of the divine being. The fear of the Lord may be the beginning of wisdom, but perfect love casts out fear. A man's attitude to the authority of the moral law may be more like the loyalty felt to a well-beloved king than the fear felt towards a tyrant. The debatable point is whether this feeling is ever a purely moral feeling, that is, whether it is ever aroused by the moral law alone apart from the belief that the moral law is given by God or some such supernatural law-giver, who is the real object of this feeling. This in turn raises the larger question whether morality does not derive its essential nature from religion, and accordingly whether it is possible to separate morality from religion except in abstract thinking. There is little doubt but that, as a matter of history, this is the way that men have felt reverence to the moral law; it has authority because it is God's law.

In the case of a political law people are ready to obey it, if they see the sense of it. If laws appear to be contradictory to one another and unreasonable, people will try to avoid obeying them. It is likely that the same is true of the moral law and this, in some small degree, explains its authority. If a moral principle appeals to one's reason, one is more likely to obey it than otherwise. Of course, those who hold

that the moral law is primarily a law of reason are in a stronger position than others here, but most thinkers would agree that there must be a consistency in the moral law which can appeal to our human reason.

While we admit the influence of these various factors in adding to the authority of the moral law, we cannot think that they get to the heart of the matter. The dictates of conscience would still have authority over us even if all these factors were absent. Nor can any teleological theory of ethics explain the fact that the rules of right action seem to have far more authority over us than the ends from which these actions are supposed by the teleologist to derive their rightness. In many ways this question of authority is a crucial one for ethical theory, demonstrating that a purely teleological theory does not explain the actual nature of moral goodness and suggesting that something more is needed than the usual type of deontological theory. This something may be, as has already been suggested, the identification of moral law with religious law. Or it may be the case, and this suggestion can be combined with the religious one, that it is simply the nature of the human species to express itself in good action. There is an urge in us, not merely a creative urge, as the creative evolutionists teach (although it may be present also), but what we may call a morally creative urge, and it is this fundamental urge of our nature that gives authority to the moral law. Like our instinctive urges, it is sometimes lacking or weak, and it is often misdirected; in one case of misdirection we have the fanatic pursuing with extreme moral fervour some course of action that common sense tells us to be wrong. In the normal man, however, this urge leads to good social relations and right living. According to this view man feels the authority of the moral law because it is man's nature to be good. And, if the suggestions that have been made about the moral law being a law of nature are correct, nature provides not only the fundamental urge but the channels for the fitting expression of the urge, and this fact will help to give authority to particular moral rules. Of course there are other urges in human nature, including what are usually called instincts; otherwise man would always do what is right.

A description of the moral life as it is actually lived should take into account all the factors which tend to give authority to moral rules and standards. A theory of ethics will be more adequate the fuller the explanation it gives of this authority, and this is where most ethical theories, and hedonism most of all, have failed. The theories which appear to be indicating the right direction for an explanation of moral authority, are the standard as the law of God, and the standard as the law of nature. To accept these, however, merely on grounds of their ethical desirability would hardly be justifiable; they require to be considered as part of a metaphysical theory which is outside the scope of an introduction to ethics.

§5. *The Various Ethical Theories in their Relation to Practice*

We must now go back to the three views suggested in the first section of this chapter and see how they are related to the various types of ethical theory.

(a) The view that ethical theory has no bearing on practice is naturally held by those intuitionists who say that the decisions of conscience or moral sense are final, and that these cannot be analysed by ethical theory. Indeed, this extreme group maintains that there is really no moral theory at all, so that there is no possibility of theory influencing practice. Their position will be modified to the extent to which they hold that the commands of conscience can be either analysed by theory or changed by education or experience. An evolutionist who holds that the course of evolution determines what is right, and that there is no possibility of understanding the principles on which that course of evolution takes place, would be in the same position. Indeed such an evolutionist is likely to go further and maintain that there is no strictly ethical theory of the nature of right and good at all. All that he would give as a description of the moral life is the statement that there is a struggle between opposing forces, and the resulting moral system is the result of the tendencies of the compact majority winning a victory, this system being liable to change with a change in the relative strengths of the tendencies at work. An idealistic perfectionism which regards the moral life as an unfolding of the capacities of our

human nature, without any principle as to which of these capacities are most worth developing, can similarly give no guidance in the practical living of the good life. This has been in particular the weakness of the creative evolutionist type of theory; unless the urge to create is guided into particular channels by some principle—some law of nature as has been suggested in this book—the theory remains very much in the air. The call of the creative evolutionist is very much like the call of idle youth in search of amusement: 'Let's do something; it doesn't matter what.'

(b) On the other hand very different guidance for practice is provided by most of the teleologists and especially by the utilitarians. The utilitarians hold that man learns in a general way by experience to approve such actions as will lead to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but these general notions need constant criticism and emendation with the help of a utilitarian philosophy. We must constantly be asking the question whether kinds of action, which led in a general way to the greatest possible happiness in the past, still do so in the circumstances in which we now find ourselves. It was in this spirit that the early utilitarians, like Bentham, themselves suggested social and political reforms which must increase the happiness of mankind. It is admittedly difficult to apply utilitarian standards to practice. The best laid schemes may, in the play of outside circumstances, often lead to results very different from those that their maker intended, but it is likely that the relatively simple aims of the utilitarian have a better chance of realization than most others, and so his standards are relatively easy to apply. We think that we know well enough what happiness means in practice and often we think that we can guess with a fair amount of certainty what kind of conduct will bring that happiness about. The same arguments apply in a rather less degree to all other teleological theories which give us a definite and more or less concrete account of the end to which right conduct leads. Even idealistic and evolutionary theories which give us some indication of the goal to be reached through development or self-realization will provide much practical guidance for the next steps in human progress, although the discovery of it may be difficult and its pursuit in practice still more difficult.

Even Plato could justify the Utopia described in his *Republic* by saying: 'Perhaps in heaven there is laid up a pattern of it for him who wishes to behold it, and beholding, to organize himself accordingly.'[1]

(c) There is however a tradition in ethics, more or less implicit in the philosophy of Aristotle, which holds that while the primary function of ethics is the discovery of the truth about moral matters, the very act of discovering the meaning of our moral opinions is bound to affect our practice by making the underlying principles more conscious by removing contradictions, and at times by rejecting common opinions in the light of the fundamental principles that the study has revealed. This is the view of those intuitionists who, along with their view that the commands of conscience are to be obeyed, also believe that the judgements of conscience can be analysed and justified by reason. Such an analysis, they maintain, itself serves as an education to conscience, making its commands more consistent and more in accordance with the objective moral law. It is also the general view of most English moralists who have derived their idealism from Hegel, although some of them, like Bradley, in their distrust of anything like casuistry, have inclined to the view that theoretic ethics has no practical bearing at all. An idealist may hold that the business of the moral life is to make fully conscious the rational, self-conscious spiritual element in human nature and presumably one way of doing so is by the reflective study of those moral rules by which man has guided [illegible] conduct, and that is the beginning of the study of ethics. One might even go so far as to say that a logical implication of such a theory is that the study of ethics by which the spiritual or rational factors determining the good life may become open to conscious reflection is one of man's chief moral duties. Mackenzie has pointed out that the greatest idealists have realized the two sides of ethical theory:[2]—(i) the moral experience of mankind consisting of those actions and opinions which serve as the data of every theory of morality and (ii) the ideal, the principle of goodness which underlies all those actions which men truly call good, and which it is the business

[1] Plato: *Republic*, Bk. IX, 592.

[2] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 7, §vi.

of the student of ethics to discover and make explicit. The type of mind, like that of Aristotle, which men commonly call 'realistic' will be more interested in the facts of experience, while the type of mind like that of Plato which is commonly, if incorrectly, called 'idealistic' will be more interested in the principles or ideals that have to be made explicit. A combination of idealism and evolutionism may find the direction in which the moral ideal has become more explicit in the past and conclude that any further development in morality must be in the same direction. It is to this conclusion that the creative evolutionists object, for they hold that there are new directions in which the principle of goodness may find an expression. It is at least plausible to suggest that the rational aspect of the ideal reached a fairly full expression in the Hegelian philosophy, and it is now likely to unfold itself in other directions.

§6. *A Comparison of Ethics and Logic*

Our third view, which may be called the critical view, suggests that the function of ethics is closely analogous to the function of logic. Men can think correctly without studying logic, and so can men live a good life without studying ethics. It is the business of logic to discover the principles on which all valid or correct thinking is done, and similarly it is the business of ethics to discover the principles on which all right or good actions are done; this is, as was said in the first chapter, to discover what makes a right action right or a good action good. A training in logic, however, will enable us more readily to observe the fallacies in our own and other people's thinking and to understand exactly the mistakes that have been made, so that if the desire is there we may know how to set them right in our own thinking, and how to make profitable suggestions to other people. Similarly a training in ethics should enable us to see the defects in our own and other people's conduct and to understand their exact nature so that, if the desire is there, we are better able to set things right in our own conduct and to make profitable suggestions to others. We have referred already to the 'time-honoured task of moralists to preach and to edify', and

ethics educates moralists for their task. There is nothing inevitable in the practical benefit accruing from the theoretical study in either case. The skilled logician, if he be so minded, may use his skill to deceive others with invalid sophistical arguments, and a knowledge of ethical theory requires to a far greater degree the presence of 'the good will' to make its teachings effective in practice. Just as the logician who is in a hurry to make his subject practical is liable to become pedantic, and to engage in 'hair-splitting' in his arguments, so the moralist who is too keen to be practical is liable to suffer from those weaknesses that brought casuistry into disrepute. Philosophical disciplines, while they have to keep in touch with the world of practice from which their data come, need also to have a certain aloofness from practice in their outlook in order to keep unbiased and objective.

Rashdall pointed out that logic had no special subject-matter of its own, but that it is the study of the methods of all the sciences. Ethics on the other hand, in Rashdall's opinion, has a special subject-matter which we have described as 'voluntary actions'.[1] From one point of view, however, the subject-matter of ethics is as wide as that of logic for it includes the actions done in all the arts, even in the art of reasoning; a man may break the moral law by deliberately using false arguments. Similarly the subject-matter of logic includes judgements made in all the sciences and among these ethics is included. Each has its special subject-matter, but in each case the scope of that subject-matter is so wide as to appear to include the whole of one aspect of human activity.

§7. *Conclusion*

On the general issue studied in this chapter it can be maintained that moral theory is certainly one factor affecting moral practice, although, like many other sciences, ethics is likely to gain by not making its practical applications its deliberate aim. The practical influence of ethical theory is illustrated by the part played by such theories in human history. Applied ethics or casuistry is a science which can be studied

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Bk. III, Ch. 5, §i (Vol. II, p. 423).

scientifically, although there is in it the constant danger of the casuist ignoring the principles of morality in his attention to detail. The main contribution of this chapter to our systematic study of ethics has been its effort to find a theoretic basis for the authority that moral standards have on people in practical living. Teleological theories fail in providing such a basis, and the only deontological theories which show any great prospect of doing so are those which regard the moral standard as a law of God or a law of nature.

Chapter XIV

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

§1. *Society as the Background of the Moral Life*

In our first chapter, ethics was provisionally defined as the normative science of the conduct of human beings *living in societies*, and throughout the book there has been frequent reference to the ways in which the actions of one individual affect other individuals. Even if we take the view that actions which do not affect other people are still the concern of ethics, so that a Crusoe who could never return to human social life would still have moral duties, we would have to admit that the life of society is the normal atmosphere, and indeed the training ground of morality. Our moral ideas develop in association with those of other people and are being constantly criticized and modified by the opinions of others. The psychological ground for our regarding our moral opinions as objective is our discovery that these moral opinions are largely identical with the moral opinions of other people; if we found that people varied indefinitely in their moral outlook there would be no reason for our thinking that our judgements of right and wrong were anything but expressions of purely personal tastes or opinions. Often these judgements have a directly social reference; one form of right action is the seeking of worthy objects of satisfaction *for other people* rather than for ourselves, and this direction towards other people is one characteristic distinguishing things that are morally good from things which are merely good or objects of value for axiology. There may be exceptional cases like those of the saint or the ascetic where the individual finds his station and its duties away from society, but for the normal man morality is a social business. The saintly ascetic may have passed into a sphere where he has become as the 'gods knowing

good and evil', but Aristotle's general rule that man without a society is either a beast or a god will still hold true.

There are two exaggerations of the view that the moral life is social, which should be avoided. (a) There is, first, the view that the good of the individual is subordinate to the good of the community, or that it is to be regarded as a means to the good of the community. If we interpret the good of the community as consisting of the goods of those individuals who form the community, then, as Aristotle pointed out,[1] it is greater than the good of any one individual, and so to be chosen in preference to that individual's good. On the other hand, if we regard the good of the community as something over and above the goods of the individuals forming it, the good of the community is not to be chosen in most circumstances in preference to the good of an individual. The good in a social organization is largely an instrumental good, serving as a means to the good of the individuals concerned. A state is good if it produces good citizens or good things for its citizens; a college is good in so far as it is a means to individuals comprehending the truth or becoming good men. There may be a sense in which a community has an intrinsic value over and above both the values of the various individuals forming it and the values of their actions; there may be an intrinsic value in the Church as Church, apart from the saintly lives or good works of its members. Yet such an intrinsic value in the institution is so comparatively small that, in cases where there is a conflict between the good of the institution and the goods of the individuals concerned in it, the latter is to be preferred. A college that spent all its income on architectural ornament and stained glass might be enhancing its intrinsic value at the cost of injuring its teachers and students. Of course what we normally mean by the good of a society includes the individual goods of its members; its own intrinsic good, if it exists at all, is only discovered by abstraction. The question of the sense in which a society may be regarded as intrinsically good needs further consideration, but for the present, it can safely be asserted that the good of individuals does not consist in their being

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, Ch. 2 (1094b).

means to the good of an abstract society. As Kant said, rational beings are ends in themselves.[1]

(b) Nor is the view correct that the test of morally good willing is its coherence with the volitions of the other members of a society, as is suggested by Professor H. J. Paton in his book *The Good Will.* It is the case, as we have maintained, that coherence may be one condition of good willing within the individual, and in a perfected community there would certainly be coherence among the different wills concerned. In a developing community, however, in which individuals are advancing in goodness, there is likely to be conflict rather than coherence among individual volitions. In such a community, the moral reformer inevitably comes not to bring peace but to bring a sword, for his reforms are likely to be resisted by large sections of the community. In our own day we have had communities manifesting an extraordinary degree of coherence in willing a definitely bad policy, such as the policy of eradicating people of a particular race from their country. Coherence may even add to the badness of such a policy. The coherence in the rascality of a caucus of political gangsters makes it worse rather than better.

§2. *The Individual and the State*

It may help to make our study more concrete if we limit our attention to one of the social groups to which an individual belongs, namely the state, although what we shall say applies to some extent to other groups like the civic community, the Church, the school, the club, the business, or even the family. The state has been given the largest place in ethical discussions although the state has often in common speech been identified with the government of the state, an institution to which the ordinary subject may not even feel that he belongs. The average Indian under British domination has regarded the state (thus identified with the government) as something alien, perhaps benevolent, perhaps tyrannical, but certainly not a social group of which he himself is part. It is unfortunate that the words 'government', 'society' and 'state' are so nearly synonymous as to lead to confusions of this kind.

Kant: *Metaphysic of Morals*, Sect. II (Abbott, p. 49).

We shall use the word 'state' here for the organized social life of a group of people under a single government, implying that the individual is conscious of himself as sharing in that organized social life, however large or small his share may be in its government. If the individual does not regard himself as part of the state in this sense, he regards himself to some extent as a slave, for the dictates of the state will be bonds imposed on him from outside and not part of the fabric of his own moral life. The word 'society' may be used concretely for any social group, and abstractly for the social life of any group.

The state resembles a living body or a work of art in having its various parts closely connected with one another, and may be described as an 'organic unity' if we do not use that word in Dr. Moore's strict sense of it. The connexions between the various parts of the state are not nearly as close as the connexions between the various parts of a living body, or even of a work of art. The particular individuals who form a state are independent beings in a way in which the cells or even the organs of a living body are not; for each individual can transfer himself from one state to another, and has, within limits, other powers of individual action that no part of the body has. The state has no purpose of its own; it only has a purpose as the individuals who form it give it one. The state moreover is by no means the only whole of which individual human beings are parts. A man may along with his citizenship of a state belong at the same time to a certain family, a certain church, a certain school, a certain business organization and perhaps to several clubs. In the first two cases, at any rate, loyalty to the family or the church is often stronger than loyalty to the state, and there are many cases where men have held it right to disobey the dictates of the state in obedience to the claims of family or of church. Some thinkers seem to regard these other societies merely as parts of the state or even as means to the good of the state, and give the state a supreme position as the 'society of societies', or with Althusius as the 'corporation of corporations'.[1] If this means that the individual is morally obliged to submit to the authority of the state rather than to that of any other

[1] Althusius: *Politicae* Cap. v. 1, 2.

social group in every case, these thinkers are certainly wrong. A pious Mohammadan in Egypt, however loyal to the Egyptian state he may be, would certainly hold that his loyalty to the Islamic church, 'the people of God', comes first. Nor can we regard a state as satisfying Dr. Moore's definition of an organic unity as a whole where the value of the whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts. It may be admitted, as we have already suggested, that the state has a value as a whole over and above both the values of the individuals forming it and the values of their actions, that it has 'the splendour and beauty of a social body . . . worth while what it costs' to individual members.[1] There may be intrinsic value in the freedom, justice and other characteristics of a state over and above the intrinsic values of the experiences of its individual members, but it is very reasonable to hold that the value of the whole is in strict proportion to the sum of the values of these individual experiences. In short, when a state is called an organic unity, that term is being used loosely and vaguely. The real unit is not the state; the real units are the individuals forming it and it is with their actions we are concerned in ethics.

It is easy to regard the state or other corporate body as a person, and lawyers frequently use this fiction for their own purposes. A state acts in many ways just as an individual acts. It issues commands, spends money and owns property, just as individuals do. There are, however, certain differences between the actions of a state and those of an individual, which are relevant for ethics. For the action of a state it is always the case that some individual or individuals are morally responsible. When a state acts we are tempted to judge its actions to be good or bad, just as we judge the actions of an individual. However, when a state acts, for example when it declares war against some other state, the decision is ultimately made by individual men or women who suggest this decision, or vote for it, or acquiesce in it, and from the point of view of ethics, the responsibility for the decision is entirely theirs. Of course the arrangements of a state may give more scope to the influence of some individuals than of

[1] Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 262.

others, but there is always a person or persons to whom the responsibility can be assigned. There is no shifting it on to an abstract entity like the state.

Discussions on the place of the state in ethics have been confused by expressions like the 'group mind' or the 'general will' used by certain thinkers, especially of the idealistic school. These phrases may be useful as figures of speech, indicating that states and other corporations act in certain respects like persons. The state may arrive at a decision in a way analogous to that by which an individual arrives at a decision; there may be deliberation on the arguments for and against a certain policy; only the arguments in the case of state decisions are most commonly presented by different minds whereas in individual decision they are commonly presented by one single mind. There is, however, no single self-conscious unit constituting the mind of a state as there is a single self-conscious unit constituting the mind of an individual. When the state decides, its decision is altogether the resultant of individual decisions, and if the decision prove unfortunate the state cannot repent of it; only individual minds can do so. For ethics the important point is that there is moral responsibility for the decisions of a state; only it is a responsibility of individuals. People who deny this think that, because the state as such cannot be morally responsible for its action, nobody is responsible. There may be characteristics of a state actions which are bad as the weather is bad or the working of an[illegible]ne is bad, and for these nobody may be responsible, but the characteristics which are relevant for ethics are morally good or bad, and for these individuals are responsible. Many people in India who, like Mr. Gandhi, regard the British government as Satanic, are inclined to say that this does not prevent them from regarding the members of that government as very good men individually. If a government is Satanic, however, some person or persons must be acting in a Satanic way. A corporation of saints does not begin to do what is morally wrong by becoming a corporation.

Another difficult concept which is relevant here is that of the common good, which is generally and rightly held to be something more than the sum of the good experiences and

actions of individuals, something that is shared by all or most of the members of a state. There are certain goods which are obviously not sharable in the sense that they can be enjoyed by two individuals at the same time, for example food and clothing. It may be the business of a state to arrange that there is a fair distribution of such goods, and a state can be called instrumentally good in so far as it succeeds in arranging such a fair distribution. The state may even go so far as to provide some such non-sharable goods, for example fuel for domestic use. The state, however, is generally more concerned with providing goods that can to some extent be shared by all of its citizens who need them, such as transport services, street lighting, protection, education and facilities for recreation and culture like parks and art galleries. The extent to which a sharable good can be shared will vary with its nature; the extent to which a tramcar can be shared will depend on the size of the tramcar, and even a public park is limited to the number of people which it can hold at any one time. These sharable goods provided by the state are again instrumental to the good of the individual, and some of them may be not merely objects of satisfaction but worthy objects of admiration in so far as they enable individuals to live a morally good life. Indeed, many have thought that the two primary tasks of the state are firstly to enable the individual to live and secondly to enable him to live well. The state, however, can at the most provide means which an individual can use, and in precisely the same conditions provided by a state one individual may live a good life and another may live a bad life. Apart from these particular goods a state may provide a moral atmosphere which may influence individuals in their actions. It is certainly easier to do good when other people are doing good—to abstain from excessive drinking, for example, when everybody else is so abstaining. In this sense the moral atmosphere of a state may form part of the common good.

The common good may then be regarded simply as the total wealth of a nation which can be divided so as to provide satisfactions to its individual citizens, or it may be used in a more restricted way for those things which can be enjoyed by all without diminution of their value. These things are

sometimes material, like famous pictures and national parks, but they are more often spiritual like a nation's culture or its moral traditions. The phrase 'common good' may be used in a very different sense for that coherence in willing which is certainly one mark of the 'good will' of those who form a corporate body. This need not imply at all that all the individuals will the same thing, but it does imply that each individual makes some contribution by way of suggestion or of assent to the activity of the group and that even those individuals who are least satisfied with the final decision acquiesce in it out of loyalty to the group. Such coherence in a community is certainly an instrumental good which can assist in the carrying through by the community of any good activity. It may also be an intrinsic good, if we regard such coherent activity as worth while apart from anything it accomplishes. In the writings of some modern Russian thinkers there is certainly the suggestion that 'sobornost'[1] or community is an intrinsic good. So the common good may include (a) the intrinsic good of the state, if there be such a good, (b) the stock of good chiefly spiritual but sometimes material which can be shared without diminution of its value, (c) the material instrumental goods which are provided by the state for the common use of its citizens and are consumed by them, and (d) the national wealth which can be distributed among the citizens of a state. It is not the case, however, that any of these things are automatically good for the individual citizen in the sense of helping him to live a good life. That depends upon the use which the individual citizen makes of them.

When we talk of doing something for the common good we are not speaking of any mysterious 'summum bonum'. We may mean that we are making a contribution to the intrinsic value of the organized community, but what we commonly mean is that we are providing objects of satisfaction and, in the case of moral good, worthy objects of admiration which can be enjoyed and used by other members of the community who choose to be benefited by them.

[1] A spirit in which all work together creatively and to which all contribute. (E. Lampert: *Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages*, p. 19n.)

§3. *Egoism, Universalism and Altruism*

The moral ideal in so far as it refers to the relations of an individual to other human beings may be considered under the headings of Egoism, Universalism and Altruism.

Egoism is the theory that it is the duty of the individual to seek his own good; the term is also used for the view that it is always his practice to do so. This latter view is called psychological egoism, the theory that a human being is so made that he can seek only his own good. He is doing so even when he appears to be seeking the good of others. The most common form of psychological egoism is psychological hedonism and our refutation of that theory will hold with some minor changes for any theory of psychological egoism. Ethical egoism holds that it is the duty of an individual to seek his own good, and in its stricter forms this theory holds that an individual ought to have no regard whatever for the good of others, except where the good of others is a means to his own good. It is a pity that in common English speech the theory of egoism is often confused with the moral quality of 'egotism', a word that should be confined to the vice of thinking too much of one's own self (as shown most commonly by the too frequent use of the personal pronoun 'I'). A man might conceivably be an egoist in ethics without showing any trace of egotism or selfishness in his character, although it must be admitted that an egoistic philosophy is more likely than not to influence him in the direction of egotism in practice.

Egoism has more to say for itself than moralists commonly admit. If we regard the moral end as perfection it is probable that we can do very little for the perfection of others. A man is able to *influence* to a greater or less degree the activities of other people, but he can *control* his own activities. This was the view taken by Kant when he bade us seek our own perfection and the happiness of others.[1] Egoism takes such a view a step further and holds that the only contribution which an individual can make to a completely good universe is the realization of his own good. The egoist too may hold

[1] Kant: *Preface to the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*, IV (Abbott, p. 296).

consistently with his main egoistic position that it is in the service of others that he will realize his own good, that it is in seeking their happiness that he will find his own, or that in aiming at a common good he will attain the best for himself. Where he differs from the universalist is not so much in laying down a different set of rules for daily conduct, but in his view of the goal of the moral life. For the egoist this is his own good and nothing else; for the universalist it is the good of all.

There are, as has been indicated, both a paradox of hedonism and a paradox of perfectionism. The intelligent egoist knows that to make a deliberate goal of his own good, whether it take the form of pleasure or of individual perfection, is a bad way of attaining it, and even for his own egoistic purposes it is wise not to keep these aims too consciously in front of him. Spencer pointed out that pure egoism is injurious to our self-interest.[1] The man who shows no consideration for others need expect no consideration from others, and every man needs the help of others in the attainment of his own individual good. Hobbes, who held that man naturally seeks his own good without regard to that of others, saw that in a community where each individual sought his own good in utter disregard of the interests of others, the life of each individual would be 'nasty, brutish and short'.[2] The strongest argument against egoism is that it is revolting to the moral intuitions of mankind. Conscience tells a man to seek the good of others rather than his own, in whatever form he may seek the good, and it is impossible to maintain a theory of ethics which is as opposed to the common-sense intuitions of all mankind as is egoism. When the hedonists based their theory on psychological hedonism they committed a mistake that is common among egoists; they took a false view of human nature. A man's impulses and desires belong to himself and are self-directed in the sense that they spring from the self. Some of these impulses and desires are normally directed to others, for example sympathy and pity, and to have these impulses is just as natural as having those directed to one's self like ambition and greed. The natural life of

[1] Spencer: *Data of Ethics*, Ch. 12, §lxxix.

[2] Hobbes: *Leviathan*, Part I.

man is a social life, and the man who goes out to seek his own good, unaided by others and offering no aid to others, is not really human; he may be Aristotle's beast or god.

Egoism however draws the attention of moralists to one truth, although the theory as a whole is false. It points out the importance of the individual in the moral life, for it is a man that is an end in himself and not a community, and the freedom which some moralists hold to be an intrinsic good is an individual freedom. If we are to accept universalism or altruism rather than egoism, we must see that the good of free individuals, and not the obscure 'common good' of some corporation, is the goal of the moral life. It is by laying all the emphasis on one particular individual, the agent's own self, that egoism goes wrong.

Universalism holds that it is the moral duty of an individual to seek the good of his community as a whole. It claims to combine the true elements in egoism and in altruism, as the good of the community will include both the agent's own good and the good of others. Universalism too is capable of an almost indefinite expansion, as moral insight deepens; a man may seek the good of his own 'set', of his local community, of his country as a whole, of all mankind, or even of all sentient creatures, and the very name 'universalism' arouses a reaction of moral approval by suggesting a wider or universal group. It certainly can claim to set no narrow limits on the range of moral obligation. It is open to criticism, however, in at least three ways. (a) It suggests the abstract good of a community rather than the concrete good of particular individuals. If we are to make the common good our aim, we must remember its concrete nature as it was analysed in our last section. (b) Universalism leaves out the notion of self-sacrifice, or it makes self-sacrifice illusory, for it holds that in sacrificing ourselves for the community we are really engaged in that course of action which will ultimately bring about the greatest good for ourselves. It will be maintained in our statement on altruism that one of the basic moral intuitions of mankind is that it is right to sacrifice one's own good for that of others, and any attempt to bring back that good to one's self by way of one's community as a whole is repugnant to this intuition of conscience. (c) From the

egoistic point of view it may be doubted whether the attainment of the maximum good for one's community is always or even normally accompanied by the attainment of the maximum good for one's own self. It is true that the higher spiritual goods are sharable, but there are lower goods, such as food, which are necessary for existence, and there is no guarantee that the life of service to the community will provide these goods in sufficient quantity to the individual who so seeks the common good. It is notorious that society has allowed some of its most selfless servants to starve and to lack the other common necessities of life. Universalism does not, as it claims, give a full scope to the realization of the good of each individual self.

Altruism holds that it is the moral duty of an individual to seek the good of other individuals with no regard for his own. If he serves his community he ought to do so entirely for the sake of other people than himself. Where egoism stands for self-realization altruism stands for self-sacrifice. It differs from universalism in its emphasis on the 'otherness' of the individuals whose good is to be sought, and there can be no suggestion in altruism of indirectly seeking one's own good by means of one's public service. Spencer pointed out that complete altruism, just like complete egoism, will lessen the general good.[1] If a man completely neglects his own health in his eagerness to serve others, or if he neglects to acquire the skill in some art which will enable him to be of service to others, he may find himself unable to do the things for other people which his altruism impels him to do. There are found among religious people, generally among women, altruists of this kind, who so entirely neglect the care of their health in the service of others, that the result is that they require other people to serve them during their illnesses instead of themselves being the servants of others that they intend to be. For most good men it is one of the self-evident intuitions of conscience that a man ought to sacrifice his own good for the sake of other people, but moralists of the teleological school do not seem to have this intuition as clearly as other people; their conscience appears to be misguided by their theory. Rashdall said that 'self-sacrifice for its own

[1] Spencer: *Data of Ethics*, Ch. 11, §lxxii.

sake is always irrational and immoral',[1] and that conscience only finds self-sacrifice reasonable when the good which we give up for ourselves is either less than or equal to or, at the most, slightly greater than the good which we achieve for our neighbour. If Rashdall wished to adhere strictly to a calculus of consequences he certainly made an illogical concession to the common-sense intuitions of mankind when he included the cases where the good lost by ourselves is 'slightly greater than' the good obtained therefrom by our neighbour. Similarly Professor Stace maintains that 'the proper degree of unselfishness in my dealings with you is that degree which will result in both you and I receiving a fair and equitable share of the available satisfaction',[2] and he reduces altruism to one species of justice in opposition to the common view that altruism is something that goes beyond justice in its benefiting the undeserving. Conscience in most men goes far further than this and approves self-sacrifice in its extremest forms, as when the woman anointed Jesus with an exceedingly precious flask of ointment that may have cost her all her fortune.[3] A rational calculation, like that made at the time by Judas, can never justify such an action; but intuition does justify it. A teleologist, as we saw in the case of Rashdall, can only justify self-sacrifice when the giving up of a good means the attainment by ourselves or others of a greater good. A deontologist, however, can maintain that there is an intrinsic fittingness in self-sacrifice, that it is 'convenient to nature' and something that corresponds at our level to the corn of wheat dying, and the animal sacrificing herself for her young. What the critics of altruism are right in pointing out is that self-sacrifice is not the only course of action that is morally fitting and that there are other intuitions of what is right provided by conscience. The religious ascetic is often a man who obeys this particular command of conscience with complete indifference to the other commands. Cases may arise when there is a real conflict between what self-sacrifice demands and what some other principle, such as

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Bk. II, Ch. 3, §ii. (Vol. II, p. 70).

[2] Stace: *Concept of Morals*, pp. 171, 172.

[3] John xii. 1–8.

duty to one's parents, demands. For a young man, the way of self-sacrifice may appear to be the acceptance of a post with little salary, but the duty of making a home for his parents may point to his accepting a post with a large salary attached to it. The self-sacrificing course of action need not always be the right one. It is obvious that most men will serve their fellow-men best in an occupation that they themselves enjoy; the doctor with a gift for medical research is likely to do more for others in the work of a research laboratory which he enjoys and which appears to lead to his own perfection in one respect, than in the privations and dangers of attending to patients in a slum infested with typhus or plague. Yet for some men, even in such circumstances, the self-sacrificing course of action, which appears so foolish to reasonable people, will be the right one, as when Kagawa lives in his Japanese slum, or Schweitzer sacrifices a distinguished career in music and philosophy for the service of a primitive tribe in the jungles of Africa. Even in such extreme cases of self-sacrifice there is, as a matter of fact, some self-realization, however little the agent may desire it; such men at any rate do something towards the perfecting of their own characters.

Spencer and other moralists have held that there must be a compromise between the ideals of altruism and those of egoism. Bradley maintained that it is impossible to reconcile the claims of self-realization and those of self-sacrifice, and considered that we have here one of those contradictions which demonstrate to us the truth that morality belongs to the world of appearance and not to that of absolute reality.[1] It may be suggested that Bradley in his conception of 'my station and its duties' himself gave at least a practical solution to the difficulty. The self-sacrifice demanded from an individual by morality is not self-sacrifice in every direction. No one thinks that the doctor who sacrifices himself in a typhus epidemic should consider it his duty to do without the medicine which science provides for his work, or even without the food and preventive medicines which will keep himself fit for the struggle. What is demanded is the sacrifice required by the

[1] F. H. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality* (Second Edition), pp. 415–420.

man's station, the particular circumstances in which he finds himself. Judas was probably right that in normal circumstances money is better spent in other ways than in anointing bodies with perfume. But Mary, the doer of the action, and Jesus saw that in the special circumstances of Mary's great gratitude and of the approaching death of Jesus, this piece of self-sacrifice was the right thing to do. It may be that the self-sacrifice demanded by one's station is always the best means for one's self-realization; for a man's particular station determines which of his capacities need to be realized. The truth of this is something that can hardly be confirmed by observation, and those who maintain it generally do so because of a metaphysical theory or a religious faith. If we hold with Archbishop Trench

> 'Thou cam'st not to this place by accident,
> It is the very place God meant for thee',

then we may believe that this place or station is the one where the same conduct will fulfil our moral obligation to engage in the most thorough-going self-sacrifice and along with this will lead to our own true perfection. If we ask, however, as we have every right to ask, whether our moral aim ought to be the good of others or our own, the answer of conscience is that we ought to aim at the good of others. Altruism states the view that there is something intrinsically good in self-sacrifice; it need not deny that there may be other things which are also intrinsically good.

§4. *Theories of Punishment*

There is another way in which the state commonly affects the moral lives of its individual members, and that is the way of punishment. It is evident that the laws of a state sometimes deal with moral matters directly, although at other times they deal with matters which become only indirectly moral, through their being dealt with by laws which are bound to affect our social relations. Punishment is sometimes given for an offence that is morally wrong, such as theft, but it is sometimes given for actions which may be non-moral or even morally right, as when a conscientious individual refuses

to pay taxes as a protest against what he believes to be wrong legislation. In this case the conscience of the individual may tell him that his action, so far from being morally wrong, is right in a quite outstanding way. It has already been maintained in our reference to political sanctions that the sanction of punishment may be used by statesmen to encourage conduct that is bad and to prevent conduct that is good. In a book about ethics we are chiefly concerned with the justification of punishment, that is, to consider under what circumstances, if any, the infliction of punishment is morally right. The theories of punishment, which are mentioned in most ethical treatments of the subject, are often given in the form of psychological theories which explain the origin of punishment. That is an interesting question, but not one which is of primary concern to ethics.

The three common theories of punishment are known as (a) the deterrent theory, (b) the reformative theory, and (c) the retributive theory.

(a) *The Deterrent Theory*. According to this theory the purpose of punishing anyone who has done wrong is to deter others from doing the same wrong. It is the view of punishment that is held when the judge makes an 'example' of some offender. Moralists often object to this view of punishment because, according to it, the offender is being treated merely as a means to the good of others. This, however, is not quite correct, for, except in the case of capital punishment, the punishment is likely to have a more deterrent effect on the offender himself than on others, and so he is not being used as a *mere* means to the good of others. The real weakness of the deterrent theory is that, if the only purpose of punishment is to deter people from wrong-doing, it does not really matter whether the person punished is himself innocent or guilty. There have been cases where administrators of occupied countries or even inefficient schoolmasters have punished innocent victims simply for the sake of the effect on other people; and this is the natural outcome of a deterrent theory. It is even more common, however, to give, on the pretext of deterring other people, a punishment which is more severe than that which would have been given on other considerations, and this is a case in which, clearly, a moral issue

is involved. It is always wrong to inflict on an offender greater suffering than he deserves, and no deterrent argument can justify this being done. The exact sense in which an offender deserves punishment will need to be considered in connexion with the retributive theory, but there is no doubt that most people, including those being punished by legal sentences, have a very clear intuition that punishment beyond a certain limit for a particular crime is unjust. It may be that, up to that limit, the magistrate is justified in varying the degree of punishment for deterrent considerations. If the offence is not likely to be repeated there may be good grounds for letting the offender off easily, while, if the offence is becoming more common, it may be desirable to punish the offender as severely as he deserves to be punished.

(b) *The Reformative Theory.* According to this theory, the aim of punishment is to reform the character of the offender himself. This view is popular at the present day, but is often misunderstood. Many people who say that punishment should have in view the reformation of the offender, mean that the offender should not be punished at all but that he should receive an education which will enable him to live better. There can be no doubt of the desirability of giving offenders such education, but education is not punishment, except in so far as it is a painful process, and modern educators are inclined to deny that the process needs to be painful. It is certainly not the case that to inflict pain on a man is normally the best way to reform him, and yet that is what a reformative theory of punishment would strictly imply. There are other ways of reforming the offender—education, kind treatment and even forgiveness. To know whether a man is likely to benefit most from suffering pain or from being forgiven is exceedingly difficult, as conscientious teachers have known from experience for a very long time; and there can be no general rule on the matter. It is reasonable to believe, however, that the suffering of pain may often have a good effect on the offender. In dealing with sanctions we saw how physical pain serves as a warning and a stimulus to changing one's habits, and the pain inflicted by legal sentence may in many cases have the same effect. Capital

punishment cannot be justified on this theory without a much more extensive knowledge of what happens after death than even the most dogmatic expounders of immortality claim to give, but it is doubtful whether the enlightened conscience ever approves capital punishment. It is to be remembered that physical pain is not the only form of punishment. The real suffering of those punished by imprisonment and especially by solitary confinement is a pain which is not caused by violence to the body, and probably the pain of social disapproval is for most people the severest form of punishment. The reformative value of such suffering lies in its capacity for making the offender see the evil of his wrong-doing, and this will be considered later.

(c) *The Retributive Theory*. This theory of punishment in its simplest form holds that the aim of punishment is to make the offender suffer what his victim has suffered, and so this theory appears to justify the law of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'.[1] If the business of a theory of punishment were to explain how the custom of inflicting punishment began and developed, there would be good grounds for accepting the retributive theory in some form or other. It is a natural tendency or instinct, which is found among animals as well as men, to requite injury with injury. The danger in primitive society is that the injury inflicted by the man who is seeking revenge may be out of all proportion to the i[illegible]y which he himself has suffered, and very early in social [illegible]ganization arrangements are made to control the amount of vengeance taken by an injured individual. The biased victim of the crime is not allowed to decide for himself the amount of penalty the criminal should suffer, but this is decided by the old men of the tribe or by its chief, forming a primitive court of law. We may regard the 'eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth' of the law of Moses as a mitigation of the harsher punishments inflicted by the avenger in earlier times. We have in the book of Genesis an example of an avenger who boasted of punishments far exceeding the eye for an eye; Lamech sang to his wives 'If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold'.[2] It is

[1] Leviticus xxiv. 20.

[2] Gen. iv. 24

undoubtedly in such retribution that punishment had its origin.

It is not only the case that punishment has an instinctive origin, but it appears to be a necessary implication of man's living in society. A social organization requires to have certain rules or laws as we call them; otherwise it will break down. As we have regarded society as the normal background of the moral life, it is morally undesirable that such a breakdown should take place, and man revert to the 'nasty, brutish and short' unsocial existence which Hobbes depicted. If the laws of society can be disobeyed without the offender suffering any penalty, the law is no longer a law. It is in this way that political laws fall into disuse when they are no longer needed for the maintenance of society. Laws like those dealing with Sabbath observance have not been removed from the statute book of a country which had them; but for a long time no penalty was imposed on those who disobeyed them, and the laws fell into disuse. If laws are a necessary condition of our life in organized societies, and they appear to be so, then there must be some penalty for disobeying them. There may be cases where a particular law is so well established that it is possible to remit the penalty to be imposed on an offender if other considerations make this morally desirable, and this is one of the situations where ethical considerations are relevant, for a remission of penalty may seem right in itself in a particular situation or likely to produce some outstandingly good effect. There is a somewhat grandiloquent expression of this view of punishment in the statement that the majesty of the law must be vindicated, and this has been connected with the vengeance demanded by an injured victim. There is no ground for this, except the obvious one that the law-court does now through its officers what the avenger did in primitive times. The law must be vindicated, not because anyone demands vengeance, but because without sanctions it would cease to be a law.

The course of our argument has suggested that moralists here, as generally, have to examine an existing institution. There is no doubt that the moral opinion of mankind almost universally regards the taking of vengeance for the sake of taking vengeance as morally bad, and no organized community

will normally permit individuals to take the law into their own hands in the matter of vengeance. Moralists have a more difficult question to answer when they are asked whether it is right to punish offenders, and if so to what degree the punishment is justified. It is doubtful whether the infliction of punishment can be justified by the reformative effects it has on the offender or the deterrent effects it has on others; we have no assurance that the suffering inflicted is not greater than the suffering from which the offender and others are saved in future, and the educative effects of punishment are somewhat uncertain. There is a more general teleological argument for the justification of punishment; we saw in the last paragraph that it appears to be a necessary means for the maintenance of social organization, which is certainly an instrumental good, and perhaps in some small measure an intrinsic good. In any case, we must not consider the mere effect of one law being broken, but of the whole structure of the law being threatened and it is in the prevention of such a catastrophe that there is a very limited justification for a deterrent view of punishment. A consideration that has already been mentioned, namely the universal condemnation of a punishment that is excessive in view of the offence committed, suggests that there is a purely deontological view of the rightness and wrongness of punishment. Many people would say that a natural 'sense of justice' demands that punishment should be limited to a fitting amount for the wrong done, and some would go further and say that the same sense of justice demands that evil-doing should be punished. Few moralists accept the view that the adding of pain, which is itself intrinsically bad, to the evil of wrong-doing will lessen the total amount of evil in the universe. There is something however to be said for this view. It is certainly right to feel indignation when one sees children being unfairly treated or poor people being oppressed, and this indignation is something entirely different from the desire for personal vengeance. It may be that in such circumstances punishment is the fitting course of action; the school-boy who takes the law into his own hands in such circumstances and gives the bully a thrashing is generally regarded as virtuous rather than vicious. In more serious cases it is obviously undesirable that the sense

of justice should be biased by the equally natural, but morally undesirable, tendency to seek vengeance, and punishment is more likely to be just, if it is in the hands of an impartial tribunal. Butler indicated this when he held that conscience judges that pain is appropriate to wrong-doing[1]—a statement that is harder to accept than its companion which states that happiness is appropriate to right doing. What needs to be remembered here is that this natural fittingness of pain to wrong-doing is only one of the moral considerations involved in a particular case. The man who demands the punishment of an offender, when it is clearly for the good of the offender himself and of his fellow-men generally that he should not be punished, is paying too exclusive attention to the natural fittingness of 'making the punishment fit the crime' and is forgetting that there are other moral considerations, one of the most important of which is the reformation of the offender. Yet it can be said that magistrates are morally right, apart from any benefits which follow, in inflicting limited punishments on wrong-doers, provided that other considerations do not make another course of action morally better.

Dr. A. C. Ewing has suggested an educative theory of punishment[2] which supplements but does not contradict the above argument. He points out that people tend to divide wrong acts into two classes: *excusable* acts and acts that are *very wrong indeed.* A man who believes that gambling is morally wrong may think it *excusable* for himself or another person to put a shilling on a horse, but may think stealing *very wrong indeed.* The existence of a law imposing a penalty on a certain kind of wrong-doing may help people to see that what they formerly regarded as an excusable act is in reality very wrong indeed. This may help them not to do it again, not because they are afraid of the punishment, but because they realize by means of the law and the punishment how very wrong it is. Dr. Ewing holds that this educative effect will only operate if people see that there is a certain justice in the punishment, or in our words, that the punishment is in some measure fitting to the crime. Punishment can be

[1] Butler: *Dissertations II* (Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists*, §ccxlvi).

[2] A. C. Ewing: *A Study on Punishment*, p. 23ff (also his *Morality of Punishment*).

regarded 'as a kind of language intended to express moral disapproval'. If people always were law-abiding, probably the expression of disapproval in words would be enough to keep them from serious law-breaking; in our unhappy condition a more effective language is necessary, and it is one function of punishment to be such a language.

Chapter XV

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

§1. *The Nature of Rights*

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, a right (in the sense that we are using the word 'right' in this chapter) is a 'justifiable claim on legal or moral grounds to have or obtain something, or to act in a certain way'. A right may be a legal right, that is a right that can be enforced through a court of law, such as a 'right of way' through the grounds of a landed proprietor, and the legal aspects of such a right are of course matters for jurisprudence, the science of law. On the other hand, a right may be entirely a moral right and one which a court of law will not enforce, such as the right of a parent to obedience on the part of his children, or the right of an old man to respect. A right may be a right to control some material object such as a piece of property, or a right to make use of the service of others as in a contract of employment, or a right to do something, as to make use of a right-of-way. For ethics the question is: 'What are the moral grounds on which the claim to do or to enjoy in these cases is justified?' The common answer is that a right is justified by the fact that the ability of an individual to assert it is for the common good. Rights imply society; the man who lived like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island would have no rights on that island; he might still have the right to expect his fellow-citizens in his original homeland to send a search-party to look for him, but that right depends entirely on the social life which he had shared with them previous to his coming to the island. His power to use the things that are available in the island would be a matter of might and not right, and these notions are entirely different in spite of the currency of the falsehood, 'Might is right.'

If the general good is the basis of rights, it follows that the way in which a right should be asserted is the way that is

most likely to increase to the maximum the common good. This may determine why some rights should be enforceable by law, while others are not. It is for the good of the community that certain rights, like the right to property, should be so enforceable, and others, like the right to respect, should not be so enforceable. If, for example, a teacher attempts to secure the respect of his pupils by force, even although he gains the outward signs of respect on the part of his pupils, the result will not be for the general good of the school as a whole. The fact that a person has a right does not mean that the person who has it ought to assert it in every case. Sometimes it is his duty to do so. If, for example, a 'right-of-way', which is of great advantage to a community, is being denied to it by a greedy landlord, it may be the duty of a public-spirited citizen to make a deliberate use of the footpath in question, so that the weaker brethren of his community may not be deprived of it. Often, however, it is not advantageous to the general good that an individual should assert his right. The assertion of a claim to some small piece of property may be so likely to cause bitter ill-will throughout a community that the holder of the right is justified in deciding that it is for the general good that he ought not to demand his undoubted right. Similarly, a member of a family may waive some privilege accorded to him in his father's will in order to preserve an equality in friendship with his brothers and sisters. In such cases, the assertion of the right may not be for the general good, although the ability to claim the thing in question as a right is always for the general good. The capacity of knowing when to assert a right and when to waive it is one of the finest and rarest qualities in the good man. It is easy to pass to an extreme of self-assertiveness which demands the uttermost farthing in every case, or to an extreme of lazy indecision which refuses to assert a claim although it is an obvious public duty to do so. Men of the highest character know whether to demand their right in a particular case, or not, by a kind of intuition. To do it by calculation would require an evaluation of all the intrinsic goods (both good actions and good consequences) to be achieved by making the claim, and comparing the result with the total good realized by waiving the claim.

§2. *The Rights of Man*

It has been the common practice of rebels against the existing social order, and of reformers generally, to state that there are certain fundamental rights of man which every human being has by nature. Such a statement formed part of the original American 'Declaration of Independence', and a similar statement was made for the world as a whole in the 'five freedoms' which were made an international goal by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill. Mackenzie made the following list of such human rights: (a) the right to life; (b) the right to freedom; (c) the right to hold property; (d) the right of contract; and (e) the right to education.[1] To call these rights natural does not mean that primitive man enjoyed them in a way that civilized man does not enjoy them. While we need not accept Hobbes's picture of natural man as being in a perpetual state of conflict, the little that we know of primitive societies suggests that there was in them more killing and oppression, and less chance of holding property or obtaining education or getting one's contracts fulfilled, than there is even in our present war-minded age. These rights are natural only in the sense that it is when men enjoy such rights that they have the opportunity of reaching their true nature in the sense of realizing their capacities or of attaining their perfection. Even in a civilized community, the general enjoyment of these rights is subject to limitations and interruptions. In the circumstances of war the community still demands that many individuals should sacrifice their lives, and that most people should give up the greater part of their freedom. Even in time of peace the right to freedom is limited by what will lead to the common good, and it is now generally realized that some measure of control over industry is needed in an industrial society. A communistic system so alters the right of the individual to hold property that it becomes something altogether different from that right in a capitalistic society; and there may be moral grounds for holding that a man's property should be limited to that which he can personally use for the common good. The laws of most states do not uphold the right of contract

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. III, Ch. 2, §v.

when that contract is obviously for the harm of the community as a whole; a law-court could not have upheld the contract by which Hardy's Mayor of Casterbridge sold his wife. The right to education of some kind or other, although it is still denied to a large part of mankind, is probably from the point of view of ethics the right that can be demanded most widely and with the fewest limitations, but even here there is only a right to education in so far as it leads to the general good.

The spirit of this argument may seem to be opposed to that of the last chapter where the concrete goods enjoyed by individuals were preferred to an abstract common good. It is to be noted, however, that we are not here discussing all forms of good, but only the good to be attained by the assertion or assertibility of rights, and these have always a social reference. But, even in this case, the common good consists chiefly of good things enjoyed by individual members of the community, and these, as matter of fact, will include the 'rights of man' to life, freedom, property, education and free contract, in so far as the conditions of social life in particular circumstances permit. The reformer's slogan of the 'rights of man' reminds us of the fact that the enjoyment of these things by the individual is good. Some of them, like the right to control property, are instrumental goods; others like the enjoyment of freedom, are probably intrinsic goods. The reformer urges the re-organization of society in order to provide these goods more adequately for each of its members. The right of them will, however, be always limited by the condition that the right of each individual should be instrumental to the common good of all in the widest sense given to that phrase.

§3. *Rights and Duties*

The word 'duty', like the word 'right', has more than one use both in common speech and in ethics. One of the ways in which we sometimes describe a good action is by saying that it is our duty to do it. The action which it is our duty to do differs from a right action in two ways. (a) It implies that only one action is right for us at the particular moment

in question, because if it were equally right to do two alternative actions, we would not be able to say of either of them that it is our duty to do it. (b) It emphasizes that the action is not merely fitting but that it is obligatory. Dr. Moore expands this second difference by pointing out that duties (in the common use of the word) have the following additional characteristics: (*a*) Duties are right actions which many people are tempted to avoid doing; (*b*) The most prominent good effects of duties are on people other than the doer of the action, hence our temptation to avoid doing them; (*c*) They arouse sentiments of moral approval in a way that merely right actions do not.[1]

The word 'duty', however, is used in a more specialized way as the correlative to the word 'right' as it was used in our last section. If a right is a justifiable claim in a community, a duty is the obligation to fulfil that claim. A duty may thus be defined as the obligation of an individual to satisfy a claim made upon him by the community, or some other individual member or members of that community, in the name of the common good. The child has a right to education, so it is the duty of his parents or of the state generally to provide him with this education. An ordinary contract like the purchase of a railway ticket shows how rights and duties are relative to each other. The railway company has a right to be paid; the traveller has the duty of paying the proper fare; the traveller has the right of being conveyed from one place to another; the railway company has the duty of providing that conveyance. This obvious relation between rights and duties in a contract has given plausibility to the view that all morality depends on a 'social contract' by which individuals agree to perform certain duties because by doing so they acquire certain rights. People agree, for example, to respect their neighbours' properties in order to secure undisturbed occupation of their own properties. Moralists who have upheld the social contract theory have not considered that at a certain date in history people met and drew up a written statement of rights and duties. To take an analogy from jurisprudence, the social contract is more like the law of a country like England, where

[1] Moore: *Principia Ethica*, p. 168.

much of the law has never been codified but is a matter of custom and precedent, than the criminal law of India which is explicitly laid down in the Indian Penal Code. There is a good deal to be said for this theory as an explanation of some of the rights and duties, which have a clear reference to the social organization in which they occur, and particularly of those moral rights and duties which are maintained by the laws of the state. It certainly does not explain all our moral duties which include the duty to waive our rights in certain circumstances.

A right may involve a duty in two different ways. (a) If one individual has a right, some other individual or individuals must have the duty of satisfying the claim which is recognized by that right. The child's right to education implies a duty on the part of his parents or of the state to provide him with that education. In some cases, the duty related to a right is not so obvious, because it is largely a negative duty or a duty of abstaining from something. A man's right to the use of his own property implies a duty on the part of his neighbours to refrain from encroaching on that property. (b) If an individual has a right it is his duty to use that right for the common good of his community. It is, for example, the duty of a child to use his education in such a way that he may become a useful member of society. This is an aspect of rights which is not conspicuous in the laws of a state, and the rights guaranteed by them. The laws of a country, both for the sake of preserving the individual's right to freedom, and because too much petty interference with the private lives of people generally leads to bad results, normally imply that in ordinary circumstances the individual has the right to do what he likes with his own, although the trend of present-day legislation in most countries is in the other direction. But in extreme cases the law-courts have maintained that the individual's freedom is limited. The will of a man who has left his fortune for such an anti-social purpose as the feeding of rats will not be upheld in court. From the point of view of morality, however, there is general agreement that the fact that a man has a right, which ultimately is a right to use his fellow-citizens as means to his own welfare, does imply that he has a duty to use that right in a way that

is either for the benefit of his fellow-citizens, or at least not to their detriment. If he fails to do so he will be using his fellow-men merely as means, and so failing to conform to Kant's second form of the categorical imperative. It is just because of this duty to use a right for the common good that it is sometimes a man's duty to assert that right, and sometimes it is his duty to waive the same right. The deciding factor is his knowing which course of action will in the special circumstances of each case lead to the larger addition to the common good.

§4. *The Determination of Duties*

In our last chapter a statement was made of five universal 'rights of man', although it was seen that in each case there are certain conditions in which the right does not hold. It has been the common practice of moralists from time immemorial to make similar statements of universal duties. The best-known example of such a list is that known as the 'Ten Commandments' contained in the law of Moses. The last six of these commandments deal with duties which are distinctively moral, while the first four deal with duties which are primarily religious. Rules of this kind are the rules which the general intuitionist says that men know directly by intuition. Mackenzie dealt with the universal duties under the headings 'respect for life', 'respect for freedom', 'respect for character', 'respect for property', respect for social order', 'respect for truth' and 'respect for progress'.[1] The word 'respect' with which Mackenzie began each statement itself indicates a certain vagueness in the definition of the duty; it seems not to tell a man what he ought to do in each case, but only that he should consider how to do his duty when a question affecting life, freedom or one of the others, arises. It is evident that there is likely to be a conflict among the various types of duty. Respect for social order and respect for progress will certainly clash with one another, and to discover which course of action will preserve what is best in the established order, and at the same time will lead to something even better in the future, is a matter of the greatest

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*, Bk. III, Ch. 3, §§ii–viii.

difficulty. The most that can be said for the 'Ten Commandments', or any other common-sense statement of universal duties, is that they hold in the vast majority of cases, but there always will be cases where the duty is not clear, especially in cases where two different commandments point to courses of action which are incompatible with each other.

Two questions with regard to the determination of duties are often confused. There is the question of the universality of a duty, that is, whether it is obligatory on every man in every station to perform that duty. Many people hold that veracity and justice are duties of this kind. There are, however, two interpretations of universality. The medieval moralists made a distinction between commandments which are always obligatory ('obligant semper') and commandments which are obligatory 'for always' ('obligant ad semper'). It is a man's duty always to refrain from stealing, but while it is a man's duty to give to the poor no one can say that it is his duty to be always giving to them; whether he should do so or not in a particular case will depend on circumstances, although the command to be charitable is just as universal as the command to refrain from stealing. Veracity is a duty of the same class; the command is not to be always speaking the truth but to speak the truth when occasion arises; there is no command to call a spade a spade or even by an uglier name, however true it may be, unless it happens to be our duty in the circumstances to speak on the particular issue involved.

On the whole it is easier to state universal rules about those forms of conduct from which every individual should abstain, like murder, theft or adultery, and it is no accident that of the six from among the Ten Commandments which deal with moral matters five are prohibitions in the negative form 'Thou shalt not'. There is, however, here a second question, namely, whether the duty can be so expressed in definite words that the cases to which it is applicable will be evident to all, and in this respect prohibitions are in very much the same state as positive commands. There are certain forms of evil, forbidden by the universal prohibitions, such as deliberate murder for the sake of robbery or deliberate unfaithfulness to a loyal partner in marriage, from which it is universally agreed that everybody ought to abstain. But

even in the case of these universal prohibitions there is considerable difference of opinion as to what is included in the prohibition. Does murder include killing under extreme provocation, killing in self-defence, the inflicting of capital punishment, killing in war, and the killing of the lower animals? Does theft include the exploitation of labour, the evading of taxes by devices permitted by the law, the gaining of unearned increments, for example by an unforeseen rise in the price of land through its being encroached on by an expanding town or through minerals being discovered under it? These are questions that have troubled conscientious people, and to state in definite language even in a negative form a universal duty is quite impracticable.

There are certain positive duties which can be stated as definitely as any negative duty, although they are few. The duty of paying one's debts is an outstanding example. The Ten Commandments enjoin one religious and one moral duty in a positive form, the moral duty being that of respect to one's parents. This is, however, a duty which will not hold under certain conditions. The sooner that a child learns not to honour parents who are constantly engaged in a life of malevolent treachery, the better. It is also a duty which it is very difficult to express in clear terms defining the actions it requires; the duty is certainly very different in the case of a child from what it is in the case of a grown-up man. It is true, however, that in normal cases people have, other things being equal, a duty to respect their parents, and there are other similar duties of general obligation, such as the duty of gratitude for benefits that have been received. So it is not the case that moral rules can give no positive guidance; the duties mentioned in this paragraph are just as universal as the duties of abstaining from murder or theft, although unfortunately they are in most cases equally difficult to express in terms which will give definite guidance in a particular difficult case.

It is however the case that many of the duties of any man depend so much on his particular station or condition that it is impossible to tell him definitely what his duties are apart from a common-sense injunction that he should respect the universal rules, both positive and negative, which are known

both by our accepted moral codes and the commands of our own consciences. About the duties of a man's station it can be said that experience shows that the individual who tries to carry out faithfully the duties recognized by himself is constantly discovering new duties which an outsider misses altogether, and so develops a sensitivity to what is fitting in situations connected with his own station. The casuist makes a deliberate attempt to apply the general principles of ethics to particular cases but, as has already been said, there is much doubt as to whether he is really able to do so. The man who lives conscientiously in a particular situation is more likely to see what is his duty than is the skilled casuist.

A distinction has been made between duties of perfect obligation and duties of imperfect obligation, and it is here that the confusion between universal duties and clearly defined duties has been most evident. (a) Sometimes all that is meant by calling a duty a duty of perfect obligation is that it can be clearly expressed in a definite law like 'A man ought always to pay his debts' or 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' (in the narrowest interpretation of that commandment). On the other hand it is difficult to express definitely in terms of action the command to be generous, so this is called a duty of imperfect obligation. (b) In other places a duty of perfect obligation is a duty which holds unconditionally in any circumstances whatever, such as the obligation to be honest. A duty of imperfect obligation is, on this view, one that is obligatory only under certain conditions; for example, the duty of giving money in charity only holds when there is some individual present who is in some respect in greater need than the charitable person. (c) A closely related way of making this distinction is to hold that while duties of perfect obligation are universally obligatory, duties of imperfect obligation only hold for certain individuals because of their particular station. The duty of being honest is a duty of perfect obligation holding for everybody; the duty of engaging in scientific research is a duty of imperfect obligation incumbent only on people who have certain abilities and a certain amount of education. It is doubtful whether any of these three distinctions has much significance for ethics; and the phrases 'perfect obligation' and 'imperfect obligation'

may easily lead one to think that the second class of duties is less obligatory than the first. The obligations of a man to do the duties of his particular station may in many cases be stronger than his obligation to fulfil such duties of perfect obligation as requiting benefits; and often all that we mean by calling an obligation imperfect is that our knowledge of what the obligation is, is imperfect.

§5. *Duty and Virtue*

Is it possible to do more than one's duty? Are there good actions which cannot be called obligatory, but which add to the moral goodness of the agent? Common opinion makes such a distinction and holds that a man's duty consists of obvious obligations like the performance of his daily work, the care of his family, and common kindness to those around him. If, however, a man does some unexpected or outstanding act of self-sacrifice then this is described as more than his duty; it is often called 'virtue', a special use of a term which has been used in as great a variety of meanings as 'duty' itself. A man who pays his taxes regularly to the government is merely doing his duty; a man who makes a gift of his property to the government is doing more than his duty, and so giving evidence of his 'virtue'. Theologians have made a similar distinction and have called those good actions which are more than duty 'works of supererogation'.

Sometimes what is meant by this distinction is merely that certain duties are enforced by the laws of one's country and are so properly called duties. A man may do his whole duty so far as it is enjoined by these laws and still be lacking in the distinctively moral virtues, like generosity and gratitude. Again, the term 'duty' may be confined to the duties of perfect obligation in any of the three meanings mentioned in our last section, and the duties of imperfect obligation would then be included under 'virtue'. Again, a man may do those duties which public opinion demands that he should do, and these are labelled his duty, but anything more demanded from him by his own conscience will appear to others as virtue. It has already been remarked that a man who lives conscientiously in a particular station will find in it duties that the ordinary man does not know to exist. The business

man in the city is apt to think of the rural squire as an idle fellow who lives a lazy life in the country, but the good squire finds in his station duties of fostering good agriculture and of administering local affairs which can be very full expressions of the good life.

Ethical theory, however, can admit of no real distinction between duty and virtue. It holds that even those who have risen to the greatest heights of moral excellence can only say: 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.'[1] Such men differ from the ordinary folk who marvel at their 'virtue' in having a deeper insight into what their duty is, and in occupying a station in which larger and wider duties are required. There are certain duties which are duties only for a very limited number of people; only the millionaire has the duty of disposing of large amounts of wealth which are not needed for his personal use. One factor which makes duty different for different people is the different guidance given to each man by his own conscience. If one man sees it clearly to be his duty to pay a certain tax, while another man in the same circumstances sees it equally clearly to be his duty to refuse to pay that tax, we may hold that fuller knowledge would bring them both to the same view, but in the present state of their knowledge it is clear that conscience points to a different duty for each of them. So the man who is said to be doing more than his duty is really the man whose moral insight shows him that he has duties which are not recognized as such by his less conscientious neighbours.

The important distinction is not that between 'duty' and 'virtue', or between duties of perfect and duties of imperfect obligation in two of the meanings of these phrases, but between the duties that are common to all, and the duties that are peculiar to individuals in view of their special station. It is a mistake to think that the former are in some special sense 'duties', and more important than the latter; ethical writers have encouraged this mistake by taking most of their examples from among the universal duties. Many good men may, outwardly at any rate, obey the Ten Commandments or any universal code; like the ruler of the Gospel, they can say:

[1] Luke xvii. 10.

'All these have I kept from my youth up.'[1] For such good men the real test of goodness comes when the circumstances of their station point out to them some exceptional and outstanding duty; the young man of our example was called upon to sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor.

§6. *Duty as Moral Obligation*

Since section two of this chapter we have been talking of duties as particular obligations, but we must now go back to a use (akin to that mentioned in the first section) in which duty stands for moral obligation generally. We may, for example, undertake a certain journey either because we want to do it, or because it is a necessary means to our fulfilling some purpose that we have in view, or because it is our duty to do so. We saw in an earlier chapter that the motive to an action may be an impulse within us driving us on to the action or an end at which we are aiming, or a sense of duty. This is the meaning of the word 'duty' in Wordsworth's famous ode, and in Bradley's chapter title 'Duty for Duty's Sake'. We may say that Kant held that duty in this meaning is the only motive which gives moral value to an action.

In this sense, duty is the obligation to conform to the moral standard, whatever it may be. If we hold that the standard is a law, either a law of God or a law of nature, our duty is our obligation to obey that law. If we hold that this standard is the attainment of one or many intrinsically good things for ourselves or for other people, our duty is our obligation to seek these ends. Our study has made it amply clear that it is not easy either to know or to apply these standards, and when people are enjoined to do their duty, all that is usually meant is that they should act according to the immediate intuitions of their consciences. Indeed, all that the moralist can advise for any particular moment of choice is that it is a man's duty to do what his conscience at that moment indicates, although the moralist may add that the individual has an even graver duty of educating his conscience in so far as he has the power to do so.

People vary much in the extent to which their conduct is determined by what they consider to be their duty, their

[1] Luke xviii. 18–23.

sense of duty in the common phrase. People who are so guided in an outstanding way are said to be conscientious or said to have a strong sense of duty. It is debatable whether this conscientiousness is necessarily a mark of outstanding goodness of character; there are cases where it may indicate rather strong tendencies in the direction of evil which have to be combated and overcome. There is at any rate a very different type of good character from that of the conscientious; there are people who seem to do good almost unconsciously without any feeling of obligation. Wordsworth refers to them as

> 'Glad hearts without reproach or blot,
> Who do thy work, and know it not.'

In many ways this is the nobler type of character. On the other hand many hold with Kant that there is a special moral value in doing an action simply because it is a duty, and not because it appeals to any other motive. It is through such acts of willing what is contrary to a man's own inclinations that a strong character is developed. The sense of duty does have a place in the moral life, but it is not the only motive to good actions. The aim of the good man is to form such habits of doing his duty, including the habit of watching for new opportunities of good action, so that he may do good almost automatically, without a constant reference to the guidance of his own conscience which may even lead him into a bad ha[illegible] of morbid introspection.

Chapter XVI

VIRTUE

§1. *The Meaning of Virtue*

The Greek word ἀρετή which is translated by the English word 'virtue' was used for excellence of any kind, and we occasionally find the English word used in a similar way, as in the sentence 'The medicine has lost its virtue'. But generally the excellence referred to is an excellence belonging to man, so that the virtues may be described as the forms of human excellence. In ethics, 'virtue' is used with two somewhat different meanings. (a) A virtue is a quality of character —a disposition to do what is right in a particular direction, or to perform one of the more universal duties mentioned in the last chapter. (b) A virtue is also a habit of action corresponding to the quality of character or disposition. We may refer to the honesty of a man, or to the honesty of his dealings equally as virtues.

Laird has divided virtues into three classes.[1] (a) There are virtues of what he calls the *righteous quality*. A virtue of this kind consists in the habit of performing a duty of a particular kind and in the quality of character which leads to this kind of action. The only distinction that can be made between virtuous conduct of this kind and right conduct, is that the term 'virtuous conduct' emphasizes the *habitual* performance of what is right. (b) There are virtues, secondly, of what Laird called the *requisite quality*. These are necessary to a virtuous character, but are also found in bad characters, and indeed may tend to increase the wickedness of the bad. Such virtues include prudence and perseverance. The villain who is persevering in his villainy is a worse man than the villain who is hesitant. (c) There are virtues, thirdly, of the *generous quality*. These are chiefly of an emotional kind, and

[1] Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*, p. 85.

they add something not strictly definable, but of the nature of beauty or of moral intrinsic value, to actions that are in other respects right. They sometimes even give a strange quality of nobility to conduct that is morally wrong. We find this in the adventurous courage sometimes attributed to a brigand chief (perhaps chiefly in fiction) and in the loyalty often shown to people utterly unworthy of that loyalty. Virtues of this kind seem to have some intrinsic value; this at least is suggested by the value that we assign to these virtues in the characters of people where no good result follows from the presence of the virtue in their actions. Of the three classes virtues of the righteous quality are the most important in the moral life and it is with them that this chapter will chiefly be concerned. Virtues of the requisite quality are clearly subordinate to virtues of the righteous quality, for they are of value only when they accompany such virtues. Virtues of the generous quality depend more on natural endowments than the other two classes do, and are hardly to be acquired merely by the conscientious doing of one's duty. Virtues of this quality have an appeal that is perhaps more aesthetic than moral, but they do give to goodness a colour and an adventurous atmosphere which are sometimes sadly lacking in those whose virtues are merely of the righteous quality. Those who think of virtue as being something more than doing one's duty appear to be thinking often of some virtue of this kind, and these virtues do have about them a freshness of emotion and a picturesqueness to which few people attain in the moral life.

Just as the particular duties which are required of a man vary with his station, so the virtues required of a man vary with his station. Aristotle recognized this when he pointed out that the courage which is required of a soldier is nearer to rashness than the courage which is required of a statesman. There is a similar difference of emphasis on different virtues in different conditions of society. In an industrial age when England had enjoyed a long period of comparative peace, Spencer could write that 'conduct gains ethical sanction in proportion as the activities, becoming less and less militant and more and more industrial are such as do not necessitate mutual injury or hindrance but consist with and are furthered

by co-operation and mutual aid'.[1] At such a period the military virtues seemed far less important than the industrial virtues, but in a generation like our own, that has seen two world wars, the military virtues of courage and endurance receive a new emphasis. Yet it is possible to exaggerate the extent to which the virtues are affected by the moral atmosphere of a people, what Bradley called their 'ethos'.[2] It is easy to fall back into the error of the relativists and hold that what is virtuous is always relative to circumstances. This is not the case. The four cardinal virtues of the Greeks, justice, wisdom, courage and self-control, may have different applications in modern times from what they had in the days of Pericles, but their essential nature remains the same. The virtuous element in courage is fundamentally the same in the courage of the three hundred defending the pass of Thermopylae against insuperable odds, and in the courage of 'that very gallant gentleman' Captain Oates walking out to certain death in the Antarctic snows to add one small chance towards the saving of his comrades' lives, although Captain Oates was engaged in an enterprise that the Greek heroes would hardly have understood. Different circumstances, or a different ethos, made the actions in these two cases very different, but the high virtue of courage was the same in both. This is so much the case that the chief value of the analytical study of certain of the virtues which will be made in this chapter is that it confirms the view that there are kinds of conduct that are objectively good and that a reasonable explanation of their goodness is that they conform to a natural law of some sort.

§2. *Plato's Treatment of the Virtues*

In Plato's *Republic* there is found the outstanding exposition of the Greek doctrine of the four cardinal virtues, and there can be no better introduction to these virtues than to follow as far as is possible Plato's argument.[3]

In a conversation between Socrates and some of his friends, the question is asked: 'What is justice?' (The Greek word

[1] Spencer: *Data of Ethics*, Ch. 2, §vii.

[2] Bradley: *Ethical Studies*, Essay V.

[3] Plato: *Republic*, Books I—IV.

δικαιοσύνη used, has rather a wider meaning than the English word 'justice'; it connotes something between justice and righteousness generally.) Two common answers are given to the question, namely (a) that justice consists in doing good to one's friends and bringing harm to one's enemies, and (b) that justice is a name for the interest of the stronger. The former is akin to the modern view that justice consists in the giving to every man of what he deserves, but Socrates refutes this view by showing that, in so far as a good man is good, he does not do evil even to his enemies, because it is goodness and not evil that springs from a just character. The latter is akin to the common explanation of morality given by sceptics, that those in power make the prevailing rules of morality in order to protect their own interests. Socrates replies by showing that every artist aims at the perfection of his own art, and he includes rulers and indeed men of action of every type among artists. A doctor as doctor seeks the good health of his patient; it is only in so far as he is a money-maker and not a doctor that he seeks big fees. Similarly the ruler or administrator of justice seeks the good of his subjects and not his own good.

Socrates admits that, while he has shown that the two suggested definitions of justice are false, he himself has not given a clear notion of what justice is. Two of his companions, with the design of arousing Socrates to give a fuller account of justice, state in detail how much more advantageous injustice than justice in the practical life of the world. The just man is in the end likely to face martyrdom, while the unjust man even after death can get the better of the gods by a skilful use of atoning sacrifices. This causes Socrates to attempt to define and defend justice.

He begins by studying justice on a large scale as it is found in a state, for there it will be more easy to examine than in the more hidden way in which it occurs in the character of an individual. A state begins because each individual finds it impossible to supply his own needs without the help of others, and it developes until there are found in it persons who can practise all the necessary arts. The division of labour meets the needs of each individual but makes social organization necessary. Among the various classes of workers there

must be 'guardians', people whose work it is to protect the city-state from invasion and, if necessary, to extend its territory in order to meet the needs of a growing population; and in these guardians Plato's Socrates takes a very special interest. Such guardians, like watch-dogs of a good breed, must combine gentleness and spirit. A good watch-dog is gentle to his friends and fierce to those whom he does not know. Similarly the guardians must be true lovers of knowledge or philosophers for in this way they will become gentle to their friends; they must also have physical strength and courage in order to defend their country in a time of war. For such guardians Socrates suggests a scheme of education based on the two subjects already recognized as the standard subjects for higher education among the Greeks, namely, literature or music as the Greeks called it (for the pursuit of the muses includes both our music and our literature) and gymnastics, particularly in the form of military training. If these are taught in a due proportion to each other they will develop both the philosophic and the spirited elements in a human soul. At a certain stage in their education the guardians are to be tested in various ways, and in particular by their ability to resist temptations. By means of such education, the sons of humbler citizens may pass the tests and rise to the position of guardians, while some of the children of guardians may be rejected and have to find lowlier occupations. The younger men whose probation is not yet complete are called auxiliaries and do the work of soldiers, while the more experienced and tried guardians do the work of rulers.

Socrates supposes that a state organized in this way will be completely virtuous in the sense that each of the cardinal virtues will have full scope in it, and he goes on to ask where the various virtues will be found. Wisdom will be found in the knowledge of the guardian rulers whose work it is to take counsel for the good of the state. Although such guardians are naturally few in number their wisdom is of supreme importance for the welfare of the state as a whole. Courage, the second of the cardinal virtues, is evidently the special characteristic of the auxiliaries or soldiers. Their education has taught them what things should be feared and what things should not be feared, and a firm knowledge of this kind will

enable a man to resist the allurements of pleasure and to face boldly dangers and pains. It would have increased the artistic neatness of Plato's argument if the third virtue of temperance were the special virtue of the third and lowest class of the community, the class of those engaged in production both in agriculture and in industry, but temperance (in Plato's sense of self-control or moderation) is needed even more in consumption than in production, and all classes of the community are consumers. Socrates points out that the undisciplined mob will have more need of this virtue, but admits that this virtue must be present in all, thereby causing the city-state to be a harmony of all classes. It is an agreement, he says, between those who are naturally better or worse as to which shall rule.

There has been no mention so far of the principal virtue in the ideal state, the virtue of justice, about which the discussion of the *Republic* began, but Socrates says that this virtue has been implicit in all that he has said about the organization of the state. Throughout it has been assumed that each person must do the work for which nature fits him, and this is what justice is. Justice is the principle by which each section of the community does its own work and minds its own business. If this principle is observed, wisdom will flourish among the rulers, courage among both rulers and guardians, and temperance among the whole people, working folk and rulers alike.

Having discovered what justice is on the larger canvas of the state, Socrates goes on to depict it on a smaller scale in the nature of each individual. Here too we find that there are three parts in human nature corresponding generally to the three classes in the state. There is a rational part, which we may call a man's 'brains' in the colloquial sense, and it is the business of this part to exercise forethought on behalf of a man's whole being. Its characteristic virtue is wisdom. There is again a spirited part, what is vulgarly known as 'guts', and it is the business of this part to give all the help it can to the rational part in carrying out a man's rational decisions and to keep in control a man's passions and appetites. Courage is the characteristic virtue of what may be called the fighting part of human nature. The third, and the

largest part of human nature is the appetitive part, consisting of appetites and desires—'instincts' in not too technical a sense of the word. Here temperance or self-control is obviously the necessary virtue, but Socrates sticks closely enough to the analogy with the state to maintain that a man is temperate when 'the two that are governed (that is the spirited principle and the appetites) agree with that which governs (the rational part) in regarding the rational principle as the rightful sovereign'.[1] In the individual, as in the state, justice consists in each principle doing its proper work. 'The just man will not permit the several principles within him to do any work but their own, nor allow the distinct classes in his soul to interfere with each other, but will really set his house in order.'[2] In this way Socrates demonstrates that justice or righteousness is the normal healthy condition of the soul, and that vice or injustice is a diseased and unhealthy condition. Without further argument on the matter his companions are satisfied that justice is better than injustice.

The four Greek cardinal virtues appear in Plato's argument to become one virtue, the control of life by wisdom or reason. Courage is the virtue by which the rational part gets the necessary strength to control the instincts and appetites, and temperance is the virtue by which the instincts and appetites accept the control of reason. Justice or righteousness as a whole is the virtue by which each of the parts does its own work in harmony with the others. Of course, if reason is to be the controlling factor it must control not only the appetites but the desire for knowledge and the will to fight. There can be an unreasonable greed of learning and the spirited element in man often is out of control. It is up to reason to decide just how far each desire should be gratified and each interest attended to in a man's plan of life as a whole. In view of these facts a great part of the *Republic* is taken up with the planning of a course of education, and the framing of the constitution of a state, which will permit of a dominant place being given to reason and knowledge so that there may be the wisest control of every aspect both of individual and of social life.

[1] Plato: *Republic*, Bk. IV, 442d.

[2] Plato: *Republic*, Bk. IV, 443d.

Plato's great contributions to ethical thought are his recognition that goodness consists in the natural and proper functioning of our human nature and his view of society as the normal background of the moral life. There is in his theory a tendency to make morality a means rather than an end by considering that the moral aspect of life is merely the framework in which the other human functions carry on their work harmoniously. There are virtues and virtuous forms of activity which are intrinsically good and not merely conditions of goodness. The strongest objection to Plato's theory is undoubtedly one mentioned by Professor Stace, that it would be possible for a man to control his appetites perfectly and yet be entirely selfish; while for many people selfishness is the most outstanding form of evil.[1]

§3. *The Cardinal Virtues*

The four virtues which Plato described in the *Republic* were called in later times the *cardinal* virtues. The word 'cardinal' is a derivative of the Latin word 'cardo', meaning a hinge, and the cardinal virtues are the virtues by which the moral life is supported, as a door is supported by its hinges. Medieval philosophers added to the four cardinal virtues the three *theological* virtues of faith, hope and love, but these, at any rate in the interpretation given to them by the Churchmen of the Middle Ages, are directed towards God rather than towards one's fellow-men, and so are matters for religion rather than for morality. It is possible still to regard the four cardinal virtues, if they are widened somewhat in their scope, as the most important constituents of goodness, and they will certainly repay a fuller consideration.

(a) *Wisdom.* There has been a great deal of discussion as to what Socrates meant by saying that virtue is knowledge, and as to the exact nature of the wisdom which, according to the *Republic*, has the supreme place in the soul of the just or righteous man. In modern times a distinction is made between the natural intelligence, which psychologists measure by means of intelligence quotients and which is held to be largely a natural endowment, and the acquired knowledge which is obtained from observation and study. Natural

[1] Stace: *The Concept of Morals*, p. 259.

intelligence itself appears to include more than one ability, at least an analytic ability and a synthetic ability. The scientist uses analysis to a greater extent than the philosopher, who uses synthesis especially in his attempt to view the universe as a whole. There is also held to be a distinction between theoretic ability and practical ability. Metaphysicians and mathematicians have theoretic ability, while stockbrokers and priests skilled at the confessional have practical ability. The Greek conception of the wise man, the σοφός, seems generally to have put the emphasis on theoretic and synthetic ability, but it is likely that Socrates included both natural ability in all its different forms and also acquired knowledge of all kinds in the virtue of wisdom.

It is obvious that both natural intelligence, at any rate of the more practical kind, and a wide knowledge of facts may find a place among Laird's virtues of the requisite quality. Practical skill in dealing with people may cause a man's benevolence to be far more useful to society than otherwise it would be, and a knowledge of the circumstances in which he is acting will certainly help a man in the practice of any of the virtues of the righteous quality. There can be in otherwise virtuous people a stupidity which goes far to nullify their virtues. On the other hand, such natural ability and acquired knowledge can also increase the evil of a wicked man's vicious practices. The able villain and the villain who knows all about the circumstances of his crimes are more dangerous villains.

At the same time it is possible to hold that both natural intelligence and knowledge that has been acquired are things of intrinsic value. The wisdom of the sage, watching from his philosophic Everest, 'the long heave of the surging world', is something that is good in itself and requires no further justification, as Aristotle saw in his praise of the life of contemplation.[1] In this sense, wisdom may be regarded as a virtue of the generous quality, in itself a worthy object of admiration. The acquiring of knowledge is less a matter of natural endowment, and, like the more distinctively moral virtues, depends more on habits of choice.

Many people would admit that natural ability and acquired

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, vii.

knowledge are virtues of the requisite quality, and that some forms of them, like the wisdom of the sage, are virtues of the generous quality, but would deny altogether that they can be virtues of the righteous quality. To leave Laird's more accurate terminology for that of common speech, is it possible to regard a man as morally better because he is naturally more intelligent or possesses more knowledge than his neighbours? The tendency of modern thought is certainly to hold that the philosopher or the scientist need not be morally better than the uneducated artisan or the farm labourer with a low intelligence quotient. Indeed, some would say that the secret of moral goodness, like the secret of religious relevation, has been hidden from the wis and prudent and revealed unto babes. This, however, was not the view of Plato, who taught that the only people capable of guiding their own lives and so of controlling the lives of their less gifted fellow-citizens are men who have been shown by testing to be men of outstanding theoretic ability, and who have been given a long training in mathematics and logic with the special aim of developing their powers of reasoning. The writers of the Hindu Upanishads shared this view of Plato's; the sage, who has reached the intuition of the Brahman, is not only the wisest but morally the best of men.

The modern view certainly requires some qualifications and limitations. The tendency for certain forms of criminality to occur most commonly among people with a fairly low intelligence quotient is well established, and this certainly suggests that a certain amount of ability is advantageous for living a good life. We are in danger too of supposing that ability and knowledge are necessarily ability and knowledge of the academic variety that can be measured by the class of university degree to which a man attains. There are other kinds of ability and knowledge; in a rural community, for example, the best men morally are often men of outstanding ability and knowledge, the far-sighted shepherd of the hills or the philosophic shoemaker, men whom Socrates would have recognized as genuine partners of his own, for they are men who thoroughly understand their own craft and at the same time have often a width of outlook greater than that of the specialist confined to a narrow academic circle. At the

same time there is no doubt that relatively simple-minded people are often more virtuous than the wise, and specialists in logical and mathematical reason, who have had the kind of education which Plato recommended, do not appear to show any conspicuous ability in keeping their appetites under control. What the Greeks did not realize in the place that they gave to knowledge is the fact that for most men the intuitive guidance given by conscience which has been unconsciously trained in the society of good men is sufficient knowledge for virtuous living. A society composed of such simple-minded people may require from time to time the presence of a sage to keep its moral ideas from becoming merely conservative. The fellowship of the early Christians gained much from the presence in it of a thinker of outstanding ability like St. Paul, but there was no need in that or any other society for all good men to be philosophers. There is sometimes an outstanding goodness of character in the wise man, a virtue of the generous quality, which was found most conspicuously in Socrates himself, but this is one of those exceptional blossomings of human goodness like the gallant courage that wins the Victoria Cross or the extreme asceticism of certain saints. For the ordinary man the moral duty in the matter of wisdom appears to be to use what ability he has to discover what is right and to put himself under the guidance of better men, at least to the extent of living in their company and following their examples.

(b) *Courage.* Plato recognized the subordinate place of courage in the moral life. Wisdom comes first in giving a man his directions, and courage is then needed to resist that fear of pain which drives a man away from the path in which wisdom directs him. There seem to be several closely akin virtues included in courage. There is a courage of the generous quality which is largely a matter of natural endowment, and which sometimes occurs in people who are very unworthy in other respects. This kind of courage may win the Victoria Cross in war, but it also may be seen in the performance of a daring crime. Of courage of the righteous quality there seem to be at least two kinds: (i) active courage or valour which persists in carrying through a course of action in spite of threats of pain or even actual experience of pain;

and (ii) passive courage or fortitude which bears unavoidable suffering without flinching. Closely akin to these is the virtue of perseverance or of sticking to a course of action, but in this case the moral agent does not face pain so much as inertia or weariness. Perseverance was a virtue that was not conspicuous among the ancient Greeks, but it is regarded as one of the most important of virtues in the ethos of our modern industrial age. It is a virtue of the requisite quality, and perseverance in evil tends to increase rather than diminish the evil of a man's action. Valour and fortitude, however, are undoubtedly virtues of the righteous quality. As all virtues do, they depend to some extent on natural endowment, but they are developed by practice and become habits of doing what is right in face of pain or difficulty. It is common to distinguish physical courage from moral courage. Physical courage may be of two kinds which may of course be found together in one person. (i) It may be a natural insensitivity to pain or to objects normally arousing fear. In the case of such courage the flight instinct described by MacDougall is weak, and the intelligence is generally of a low level, a fact that is often described by saying that there is 'a lack of imagination'. (ii) Physical courage may be another name for the courage of the generous quality that has already been mentioned, a matter of natural endowment, but also of intrinsic value. Moral courage differs from physical courage in its full consciousness of the pain to be faced in adhering to the right course. People vary in the kinds of pain which cause them the most dread. Some people fear most the pains that come from physical causes like Shakespeare's philosopher who could not endure the toothache;[1] others fear the pains caused by social disapproval, unkind remarks and consequently wounded pride; others more saintly dread only the agonies of remorse of conscience. In the moral life there are pains which are to be avoided rather than faced; men are not called to face the pains of condemnation by their own consciences or the wrath of God; they are rather to avoid the actions which lead to such painful experiences. It is not the mere facing of pain that is a virtue of the righteous quality, but the doing of what is right in the face of pain.

[1] Shakespeare: *Much Ado*, V, i, 36.

(c) *Temperance.* Temperance is regarded by Mackenzie as parallel to courage.[1] Just as courage is the virtue which offers resistance to the fear of pain, so temperance is the virtue which offers resistance to the allurements of pleasure. Temperance is not merely a negative virtue engaged in repressing the appetites. Plato himself describes it in more positive terms as unanimity on the question as to who will govern in the state, and in the individual temperance is at work when the two that are governed agree with that which governs in regarding the rational principle as the rightful sovereign. Temperance does not merely restrain our passions and desires, but it takes from reason guidance as to how far these desires should be satisfied. In no sense is temperance to be regarded as antagonistic to pleasure; indeed the only pleasures with which temperance is directly concerned would be, according to the Greeks, the pleasures of excitement, for to be governed by reason prevents one from being carried away by excitement. Temperance demands a reasonable moderation or a happy blending of the domination of reason with the other tendencies of human nature. This was a virtue highly rated by the Greeks as in their proverb, *μηδὲν ἄγαν* ('Nothing too much'), and we shall see in the next section that it took a central place in Aristotle's conception of virtue.

Temperance is supremely a virtue which gives beauty to the moral life. It shuts out completely fanaticism or the irrational pursuit of any single limited good. Each human desire or aspiration is to be satisfied to its proper degree, and the whole moral life will have the harmony or proportion of a great work of art. This conception of the good life was characteristic of the Greeks; it was no accident that they referred to the good man as one who is 'beautiful and good' (*καλὸς κἀγαθός*). The limit up to which each craving of man's nature may be satisfied is determined by reason in accordance with the supreme virtue of wisdom. There is no notion in the Greek view of an equilibrium reached through evolution among the contending desires of a man. The harmonious balance is to be accomplished by man's use of his rational powers, and these need the help of man's 'spirited' element to accomplish their purpose, for the moral struggle

[1] Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics,* Bk. III, Ch. 4, §vi(a).

is not an easy one. This domination by reason gives a certain dignity and poise to the good life as it was conceived by the Greeks, and the Greek word σωφροσύνη, which is translated into 'temperance' in English, has always this suggestion of dignified serenity.

There is however an element of 'going to an extreme' in the good life which is apparently antagonistic to temperance. This virtue is closely akin to that perseverance or persistence which may be considered as connected with the virtue of courage. The Greek view of temperance is perhaps slightly caricatured by the author of the book of Ecclesiastes (who was probably an Alexandrian Jew): 'Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise. Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?'[1] This is opposed to the teaching of the New Testament in which Christ bade his disciples 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'.[2] This second kind of goodness is prepared to persist in the right course even to the extremest forms of self-sacrifice. It is the characteristic of the hero and of the saint but, like temperance, it has an aesthetic quality; it is what Laird called a virtue of the generous quality. A reconciliation between the two apparently opposing virtues is possible. For the normal course of life wisdom ordains a due proportion in all things; but there come occasions when the only fitting course of action, certainly morally fitting and perhaps aesthetically fitting, is to go all out for the realization of one single aspiration. It then looks as if reason were thrown aside in the process, but it may be that wisdom itself directs the forgetting of its own more normal courses at such a moment of high duty.

(d) *Justice*. Justice is distinguished from the other cardinal virtues in having a more explicit reference to man's social relations. Wisdom, courage, and temperance are primarily virtues of an individual man; justice is primarily a virtue of a society. There are certain implications of Plato's conception of justice that are worth noting. Plato appears to hold that a certain amount of freedom is required for the individual, for justice is 'the power that makes each member of a state do his own work' and the rulers are to see that 'no

[1] Ecclesiastes vii. 16.

[2] Matthew v. 6.

one may appropriate what belongs to others or be deprived of what is his own'.[1] This surely means freedom from interference. Again, a certain amount of equality among individuals is implied in the recognition that every member of the community has a function to perform. Freedom and equality are not merely conventions that have been found useful in the development of society; they are in some sense natural, and based on laws of nature. It is naturally fitting that the individual should have some freedom for his creative work; otherwise the creative impulse remains suppressed. It is fitting again in some degree to treat human beings as equals; the resemblances among men are far greater than the differences. In our modern conception of justice we add a third implication intuitively known to us; as Butler indicated,[2] conscience judges that pain is appropriate to wrong-doing and happiness to well-doing. This too is a kind of justice.

Modern views of justice differ from one another as they emphasize either the principle of equity or the principle of deservingness. Justice with the emphasis on equity has been conveniently described as 'Each to count as one, and none as more than one'. If this were applied merely to the distribution of goods it would be identical with Aristotle's distributive justice.[3] Justice with the emphasis on deservingness may be stated in the principle 'To every man according to his merit', or in a more particular setting, 'To every man according to his work'—a principle more or less akin to Aristotle's retributive justice.[3] The difference between these two views of justice is merely one of emphasis. 'Each to count as one' emphasizes the natural equality of men, a fact of which those who enjoy special privileges need constantly to be reminded. 'To every man according to his merit' denies an absolute or unconditional equality; it maintains that there is a natural fittingness in reward and punishment as well as in the like treatment of all.

The special problem of justice is to what extent each of these principles is to be realized after due consideration of other

[1] Plato: *Republic*, Bk. IV, 433e.

[2] Butler: *Dissertations II* (§246 in *British Moralists*).

[3] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, iii, iv.

moral principles. The principle of equity demands an equal distribution of satisfactions among all persons. The principle of deservingness holds that it is right that special satisfactions be given to the deserving and that certain should be denied to the undeserving. Both of these may find themselves in conflict with an ethical principle that the amount of good in the universe should be increased as much as is possible (of whatever that good may be thought to consist by the differing schools of ethics). In the present arrangements of society at any rate these three principles appear to lead to very different distributions at least of material goods. The mere giving to each individual of an equal amount of wealth would not satisfy the principle of deservingness, for people who do great public service would receive no greater reward than the others. Nor would such a distribution tend to the increase of the total amount of good, for doctors and scientists and others who do a very special service towards the increasing of the total amount of good would on this distribution lack the necessary resources for engaging in the research which their work demands. Modern socialism realizes this, and it meets the difficulty by placing such specialized goods under the control of the government so that they may always be available for those who are most fitted to make use of them for the common welfare. According to this arrangement, education is provided without charge by the state for all individuals in so far as they show the ability to profit by it, and research laboratories are provided for those who have the ability to use them. The same difficulty in conforming to the three principles we have mentioned does not occur in the case of spiritual goods, for, as we have already seen, the fact that one person is enjoying them does not prevent other people from enjoying them. Many people can enjoy simultaneously a beautiful scene or a wonderful piece of music. Rashdall mediated between the principle of equity and the principle of deservingness by a principle of equal consideration. What each individual has a right to is not an equal share of the common good but a consideration equal to the consideration given to others.[1] Professor Stace, in a similar way, says that justice demands that there ought not to be

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Bk. I, Ch. 8, §ii.

any different treatment of persons *as persons.*[1] Justice does not deny that there are extrinsic differences between persons, such as their needs or their abilities, or that people ought to be treated differently from one another because of these extrinsic differences. Rashdall's consideration would take into account among the extrinsic differences what each individual deserves, and deservingness would be so widely interpreted as to include not merely the work done by an individual or the 'virtue' of the individual, but even more his need of a particular good and his ability to use that good. In a good society justice demands that the lame man, however unworthy he is morally or however little he is able to do for the common good, should be provided with an artificial leg. Again, the fact that a man can read Greek gives him a claim to the use of a Greek dictionary and copies of the Greek classics that the person who knows no Greek, however worthy and hard-working he may be, has not got. What the conception of justice emphasizes is that there are other considerations in ethics than the mere increasing of the total amount of good. The necessity of such a principle is most clearly seen in the case of hedonism; a fair distribution of pleasure is even more desirable than an increasing of the total amount of pleasure. When we turn to the higher forms of good there is probably no conflict involved, for in the case of intrinsically good things like moral perfection, aesthetic enjoyment and the comprehension of truth, the wider the distribution of these goods the greater will be the ultimate total of the good achieved.

The notion of each man getting what he needs suggests another virtue which is commonly held to be a necessary supplement to justice, the virtue of benevolence. Benevolence consists in the satisfying of the needs of others even of the undeserving. It has been pointed out that the principle of equal consideration in justice does take into account people's needs, and it is the function of benevolence to emphasize this aspect of justice as contrasted with the aspects of equity and deservingness. It has been suggested that if there were a perfectly just distribution of goods there would be no place for benevolence in the moral life. It is true that the mere

[1] Stace: *Concept of Morals*, p. 176.

giving of money by the rich to the poor would disappear. In our present state of society, however, people who have approximately the same amount of wealth and who live in the same class of society, find constant opportunities of helping one another because of the special abilities of each, and this is surely an exercise of the virtue of benevolence. What would disappear in a just order of society is the attitude of patronage on the part of the giver, and the attitude of servility on the part of the receiver, and the disappearance of both would be a great moral gain.

§4. *Aristotle's Conception of Virtue*

Aristotle said that the moral end is 'eudaimonia', which may be translated 'happiness', and he said that 'eudaimonia' consisted in the exercise of a man's soul in accordance with virtue. To put it in Aristotle's own terminology, 'eudaimonia' is the *end*,[1] or what was later called the final cause of the moral life, while virtue is what was later called the '*form*' or the '*formal cause*' of the moral life. The '*form*' is analogous to the conception of his picture in the mind of an artist which guides and limits his activity as he works, and which gives shape to his creation. Aristotle defined virtue as a habit of choice, the characteristic of which lies in the observation of the mean or of moderation (relative to the circumstances of the individual concerned), as it is determined by reason or as the practically prudent man would determine it.[2]

Aristotle regarded virtue as primarily a habit of action, and so it was with him only secondarily a quality of character. Virtue is not a mere habit, but a habit of choice. Aristotle defined choice as the deliberate desire of things in our power after consideration of them by the intellect.[3] Choice accordingly is in some sense free for it deals with things in our own power, and it is when such a deliberate choice is repeated that it becomes the habit of action which we call a virtue. The choice, for example, of doing what is right in the face of pain becomes, when habitual, the virtue of courage. The mere doing of single good actions may be accidental or

[1] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics,* I, vii, 8.

[2] Op. cit., II, vi, 15.

[3] Op. cit., III, iii, 19.

merely impulsive; it is the habitual choice that counts as virtue.

The point in Aristotle's definition which has been most discussed is his notion of the mean or middle course. A virtue is regarded as if it were a middle position between two vices; courage, for example, is the middle position between rashness and cowardice, and liberality is the middle position between extravagance and miserliness. The place of the mean relative to the vices at the extremes depends on the circumstances of each individual. A soldier's courage should be nearer to rashness than that of a statesman, for it is his business to take risks which it would be criminal on the part of a statesman to take. This conception is obviously in agreement with the Greek emphasis on proportion and harmony in art, as expressed in the maxim 'Nothing too much', and it is a direct development of Plato's treatment of temperance. Plato was content with showing how each desire or appetite was to be satisfied in accordance with the directions given by wisdom for the just life as a whole. Aristotle characteristically wanted to determine the limits for each virtue with more accuracy, and so, instead of relating moderation to human nature as a whole, he tried to assign to each virtue the place moderation would give it between two contrary vices. He confined himself however to the degree of the virtue, and did not mention what is equally important for morality the direction in which the virtue should be exercised. Joseph has pointed out that we need to know not only the right degree of anger which forms righteous indignation, but even more the kind of person towards whom such anger is rightly directed. We are apt to regard the mediating virtue as a mixture of two vices, but Burnet and N. Hartmann have denied this.[1] Courage is not a synthesis of rashness and cowardice, but a combination of stout-hearted endurance and careful foresight, both of which are good states of mind. What the doctrine of the mean emphasizes is the necessity of a controlling principle which will determine in each particular case just where the mean lies, and that points again to the control by reason which, for Aristotle as much as for

[1] H. W. B. Joseph: *Aristotle's Definition of Moral Virtue: Philosophy*, Vol. IX, p. 168.

Plato, was the characteristic of the just or virtuous man. Aristotle himself admitted that justice is not a part of virtue but the whole, and, in spite of his interest in details, he undoubtedly accepted Plato's view of the unity of the moral life; it is the one rational mind with its quality of wisdom which determines the degree to which each tendency of human nature should be developed. Aristotle mentioned in his definition two ways in which the mean can be discovered. The one guide is 'reason', and we can identify this with the knowledge which Socrates regarded as virtue, or with the philosophical understanding which was the characteristic of Plato's guardians, and which was developed by a long education in logical studies. Aristotle, however, who kept the common man more in mind than Plato had done, had another guide to the mean. In his definition he said that the mean is as the prudent man would determine it. The ability of the prudent man is not the theoretic ability of the philosopher, but the practical ability of a man of experience. The example of such a man can show ordinary people just how far each tendency should be allowed free play in the virtuous life. There is a way of learning what is right by a philosophical understanding of the principles of ethics; there is also the easier way of following the example of those who have learned and demonstrated their goodness in the practical experience of life. Aristotle himself described the ability of the practically prudent man as that of forming a practical syllogism as contrasted with the theoretic syllogism of the philosopher. The major premise consists in a general moral rule, however it may be obtained. The minor premise consists in the recognition that a particular action is one that conforms to the general rule; and the conclusion is the carrying out of the actual action. The power of apprehending the rule and particularly the power of seeing which actions conform to it are included by Aristotle in practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*), which is the quality of the prudent man (the *φρόνιμος*). Even with Aristotle's second guide there is no abandonment of the Socratic view that virtue is knowledge; he only pointed out that there is another and more practical kind of knowledge than the theoretic contemplation of the philosopher.

The outcome of the teaching of the Greek philosophers on

virtue may be expressed in modern language by saying that goodness implies a certain point of view, and this would be generally accepted among moralists. A man who does good deeds simply by impulse or from outside pressure can hardly be regarded as truly virtuous. The view of the Greeks that this point of view is predominantly intellectual or rational, so that coherent reasoning must always be the dominant guide, is not so generally acceptable in modern times except among idealists who have been influenced by Hegel. In the lives of good men the point of view implied in goodness has been more often religious than intellectual. The religious outlook, in the case of the higher religions at any rate, does imply that the good life is rational and consistent, but it implies a great deal more for it holds that goodness gets its inspiration from a personal loyalty rather than from the need of being intellectually consistent. It is with this question of the relation of a man's metaphysical and religious outlook to his moral life that we shall deal in our concluding chapter.

Chapter XVII

ETHICS, METAPHYSICS AND RELIGION

§1. *The Relation of Ethics to Metaphysics*

Ethics may be related to metaphysics, the theory of the ultimate nature of reality, in various ways. It has been asserted that if a moralist is to maintain that the moral life is possible at all, he must necessarily also hold certain views about the nature of the universe. It has been commonly considered, for example, that, if there is to be any real meaning in telling a man that he *ought* to have done something different from what he actually has done, a man must in some sense be free to choose between two alternative actions. It is clearly the business of metaphysics or general philosophy to inform the moralist whether he has any grounds for making such an assumption as that of human freedom of choice. Such assumptions are called postulates, and the metaphysical postulates with which ethics is concerned may be divided as by Rashdall into two groups. (a) There are postulates which it seems necessary to accept if there is to be any morality at all in the sense of there being a difference between right and wrong actions. (b) There are postulates, without which the distinction between right and wrong can still be maintained, but the acceptance of which adds reasonableness and clearness to the principles of ethical theory. There is a similar difference among the postulates of the other sciences. In most natural sciences the law of causation in some form or other is implicitly accepted as a necessary postulate; but chemistry, when it postulates the existence of atoms, is accepting a hypothesis which makes its explanations clearer and more coherent, but without which chemistry would still be a true body of knowledge.

Apart from such postulates many philosophers, especially those of the idealist school, have held that the nature of good

depends on the nature of reality, and so, that our views on what is real will affect to a greater or less extent our views on what is good. The first part of this statement has been strongly denied by Dr. G. E. Moore, who holds that good is a simple unanalysable quality not depending for its nature on its relations to other things in the universe, so that the nature of these other things can have no effect whatsoever on the nature of goodness.[1] Dr. Moore, of course, does not deny that a man's views of the nature of the universe do, as a matter of fact, influence his views on the nature of goodness. Obviously, if a man holds that good actions are to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth, his attitude to them will be different from what it would have been if he had held that good actions have no consequences at all. In the first case good actions would at least appear to him to be desirable; in the second case they might not. Again it may be the case that a certain metaphysical view has suggested a certain ethical theory to a thinker and so has been the cause of his holding that theory, but this is something quite different from holding that his ethical theory is logically entailed by his metaphysical theory or that his metaphysical theory provides logical reasons for holding the ethical theory. Dr. Moore is not concerned with such psychological differences; what he holds is a metaphysical view that good itself does not depend for its nature on its relations to other things. An idealist like Professor H. J. Paton takes the opposite view, holding explicitly that the nature of goodness depends on the nature of willing. He maintains that all willing in so far as it is coherent is good, and that the objects of such coherent willing are good just in so far as they are the objects of coherent willing.[2] To decide between Dr. Moore's and Professor Paton's views would require a metaphysical discussion far beyond the scope of this introduction to ethics. What is worth noting is that the difference in these two philosophers' metaphysical theories has meant a difference in their ethical theories, although Dr. Moore would maintain that, even if the universe actually is what the idealists think it to be, it would make no difference whatever to the nature of good itself. For

[1] Moore: *Principia Ethica*, Ch. 4.

[2] Paton: *The Good Will*.

Dr. Moore's realism good is an unanalysable, indefinable quality. For Professor Paton's idealism the goodness of actions or of objects depends on their relations to the wills of human beings or of the Absolute. Ethical views, as contrasted with ethical truths, certainly depend on metaphysical views. Dr. Moore would have to admit that if the sole reality is eternal and unchanging, there could be no practical ethics; and surely the negative theory of metaphysics stated by Dr. Moore, that the nature of the universe has no effect on the nature of good, is itself an important theory for ethics.

There are two other ways in which ethics is related to metaphysics. (a) Ethics makes judgements of value, very often on the basis of intuitions, and it is surely for metaphysics to say, in the light of its knowledge of the universe as a whole, whether these judgements are valid. In such a superficial study as that contained in this book it has been our practice to regard such intuitions as valid, except where the intuitions themselves contradict one another or fail to fit into a coherent account of ethical judgements, but ultimately their claim to validity can only be justified by a metaphysical theory, even if it be such a simple theory as would maintain that such intuitions are given by God and so necessarily true. The sceptic who denies the validity of any judgement of value must also do it on a metaphysical ground, namely on a theory that the human mind is incapable of making such judgements.

(b) On the other hand, the judgements of value which belong primarily to ethics may serve as part of the data of a metaphysical theory. They often do so by way of suggestion; men's views of human goodness have undoubtedly suggested certain notions of the goodness of God which are found in religious and metaphysical theories, although there is no direct logical relation between the two. Some thinkers, however, go a great deal further than this and maintain that the judgements of conscience are data which the philosopher must take into account just as he takes into account the data given by the senses, and the generalizations which the scientists have made from them. The philosopher must fit into his system of reality such intuitions as that of Butler when he said that happiness is appropriate to

right-doing, or that of Bentham when he maintained that every man is to be counted as one, and none as more than one.

There are accordingly four ways at least in which ethics and metaphysics are related:

(a) Ethics finds it necessary to assume certain postulates, the validity of which is a question for metaphysics.

(b) Metaphysical beliefs affect ethical beliefs whether the nature of goodness actually depends on the nature of the universe or not.

(c) The validity of all ethical judgements can be finally determined only by metaphysics.

(d) Ethics provides judgements of value as data for metaphysics.

§2. *The Postulates of Ethics*

Kant held that it was necessary for morality to postulate the existence of God, freedom and immortality. Of these, the postulate of freedom has been most commonly regarded as a truth without which moral judgements would be impossible. Moral actions are held necessarily to be the actions of continuous selves who are in some sense the cause of their own actions. As a matter of fact there are two metaphysical schools which have tended to deny this. (a) The materialists hold that actions are produced entirely by causes which in the first place at any rate were outside the body of the agent. The individual can no more be said to cause his own actions than a ball which is impelled by a second ball can be said to move itself or cause the movement of a third ball on a billiard table. (b) Idealists of a certain type hold that the individual has no reality except in so far as he is an aspect of the one universal self-conscious being or Absolute. Accordingly this Absolute, which in our simple statement may be identified with God, is the cause of all actions, if indeed actions can be said to have any reality. On either theory, moral actions must be illusory, and so we must hold that the existence of individual selves who are in some sense the cause of their own actions is a necessary postulate for ethics.

It is much more difficult to say in what exact sense it is necessary for moralists to suppose that individuals are free. Plausible arguments can be used to show that machines like

motor cars are referred to as good or bad, although we know that their movements are determined just in the way that materialists maintain that the movements of human beings are determined. It is difficult to believe that anyone thinks that he uses the word 'good' in the same way when he refers to a motor car as when he refers to the actions of a human being. The goodness of a motor car is an instrumental value or the phrase is a figure of speech, using a rather far-fetched analogy. We saw that the notion of 'obligatoriness' formed an essential part of the notion of moral goodness, but no one except a very imaginative poet can suppose that certain movements are obligatory on the part of a motor car. The important point for metaphysics is whether indeterminism or self-determinism is the more accurate description of the actual state of affairs in the universe. In our previous discussion we saw that, although indeterminism seems the more desirable theory for ethics, either of these theories may on more accurate formulation provide all the freedom that is needed for morality, but morality does require a theory of what we may call a sophisticated type. If this be the case it follows that a crude materialistic theory of the universe cannot be true, for it fails to meet the facts of the moral life. Incidentally this illustrates how morality supplies data for metaphysics; in this particular case the fact that there are right and wrong actions, if it be a fact, refutes one of the best-known metaphysical theories, materialism.

The existence of God and the existence of immortality are at the most postulates of the second kind, those which are of advantage in giving significance and clarity to an ethical theory, but are not absolutely necessary for the existence of morality. It does not seem necessary to accept these postulates on the grounds on which Kant held them. In the case of immortality,[1] Kant held that we are under an obligation to make ourselves perfect, but in view of our sensuous nature, this must take an infinite time to accomplish. Yet, as we are under an obligation to do so, it must be possible to do so, and accordingly we must be immortal. To say that perfection takes an infinite time to accomplish is, as Professor Broad has

[1] Kant: *Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason*, Ch. 2, §iv (Abbott, pp. 218–220).

pointed out,[1] surely another way of saying that it is unattainable. In any case, when morality bids us seek perfection all that is normally meant is that we should keep on practising a better way of living than we are doing at present. The perfection with which morality is concerned is a relative perfection attainable in this life and not an absolute perfection attainable only after an infinite time. The real uses of the postulate of immortality are the importance it gives to the moral struggle and the significance it gives to the view that individual personality is an intrinsic good. If death brings complete extinction to the individual it is hard to understand what all the bother is about in morality; at the most a man's right actions could have a rather doubtful instrumental value in possibly adding to the good for future generations. It is still more difficult to understand how a human personality which is not immortal would have much value of any different kind from that of a soap-bubble which is beautiful while it lasts, but is all over in a very short time. A belief in immortality certainly makes it more reasonable for a moralist to hold that a good character or a perfected personality is a thing of intrinsic value and worth achieving.

Kant's argument for the existence of God[2] depended on his intuition that virtue ought to be accompanied by an appropriate amount of happiness. It must be admitted that this is a common judgement made by the human conscience, but that there is neither confirmation of its truth from our ordinary experience of life nor any natural intrinsic relation evident between the practice of goodness and the enjoyment of happiness. Kant maintained that, if such a relation ought to exist, conditions must actually exist which would make it possible that virtue may always be rewarded by an appropriate amount of happiness. Kant held that the only condition which can make the accompaniment of virtue by happiness possible is the existence of God who so orders events as to bring this about. It is conceivable, however, that there may be some natural relation between happiness and virtue which is not at first sight obvious. It may be that what is meant by happiness is, as Aristotle said, the exercise

[1] Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 140.

[2] Kant: op. cit., Ch. 2, §v (Abbott, pp. 221–229).

of a man's soul in accordance with virtue, and then there is no need of postulating an outside Being who can maintain the relationship. It may be, again, that some other postulate, for example the existence of an impersonal system of rewards and punishments like the system of karma and rebirth taught by Hindus and Buddhists, will provide for the possibility of virtue being rewarded by happiness just as effectively as the existence of a personal God. There are other reasons for holding this postulate of the existence of a personal God, but these may be more conveniently considered when we consider the relations of religion and morality.

Rashdall, in his *Theory of Good and Evil*, pointed out two other postulates which are at least useful to the moralist, and may be regarded as necessary postulates.[1] (a) The moralist generally assumes the existence of evil. If, as some idealists have held, there is no such thing as evil in the universe, then the moral life is not what we usually take it to be, a genuine struggle, but something illusory. It may not be necessary to think of evil in a dualistic way as something contrary to good. Rashdall thought of it rather as a necessary consequence of the limitations which God has placed on Himself by creating individual minds which are independent of His own. (b) Rashdall's other postulate is that the time process is in some sense real. If time is illusory, change can have no reality, and moral action certainly implies both changes produced by such action in the outside world and changes in the character of the moral agent. It is true that for morality we need to postulate the existence of a permanent self, but a permanent self is not an unchanging self. If the self is incapable of change then moral effort can in no sense lead to perfection.

The postulates which appear to be necessary for morality are the existence of individual selves who are in some sense the cause of their own actions, the reality of time and the existence of evil in some sense. About the other postulates, the existence of immortality and the existence of God, we can only say that to assume them would certainly add significance to the moral life and clearness to our ethical explanations. This fact in

[1] Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Bk. III, Ch. 1, §viii–x (Vol. II, pp. 235–245).

itself would of course give some little support to a metaphysical theory which found a place for these things, although we cannot accept such a theory merely on the ground that it is more convenient for ethics than other rival theories. Ethics can only present its own data and its own needs; metaphysics must make its own theories.

§3. *The Universe Regarded as Possessing Moral Relations*

The particular view of morality that has found most support in this book, namely that the laws of morality are in some not clearly defined sense laws of nature, is a view with definite metaphysical implications. To state all these implications in a systematic way would mean the statement of a complete metaphysical theory, and this, even if it were possible to state it, is not within the scope of an elementary introduction to ethics. In this section some suggestions will be made as to the kind of universe in which the ethical views expressed in this book may be true. The nature of the universe and the consequent validity of our particular view of morality are matters for the metaphysician to consider.

It is common to regard the universe as containing events related to one another by relations of cause and effect, and to hold that some events resemble one another so much in this matter of causation that it is possible to make a general statement that an event of a certain kind is likely to be followed by an event of another kind; for example, that the exposure of water to great heat is likely to be followed by its evaporation, or that the biting of a man by a particular kind of mosquito is likely, but a little less likely, to be followed by his suffering from malaria. Such general statements are now commonly called scientific laws or laws of nature, although it is only since the seventeenth century that the phrase 'natural law' or 'law of nature' is used of such generalizations in physical science. It is a matter of dispute whether all events in the universe are related to one another in some such way as that generalized in the laws of nature. Most psychologists hold that, while the events known from the introspection of our minds are also related to one another in some way, the relation between mental events is not of the same kind as that found between physical events, and that the laws of psychology are

not scientific laws in just the same way as the laws of physics are scientific laws. In any case it is unlikely that a knowledge of all the causal or apparently causal relations of events within human minds would be the whole truth about these minds. There are relations in the sphere of mind, such as the relation of love, which are not merely causal relations, but something more. Many people hold that the most important characteristics of a human being are not the characteristics which are common to many people, which would make it possible to enunciate scientific laws or generalizations of some sort, but rather the characteristics in which a human being differs from other people or the characteristics which make him unique. This view holds that the most important fact about a human personality is its uniqueness, so that there never can be two people exactly similar to one another.

The question may be asked whether it is possible to make about the universe general statements of other kinds than causal laws. We certainly do so in the case of aesthetic statements. We can say, for example, that two colours always go well together, or that two musical notes are always in harmony with one another; these are universal statements about relations that are not obviously causal relations. (In aesthetics too there is the aspect of uniqueness in each beautiful object as well as the aspect of similarity about which we can make such general statements as those occurring in our last sentence; it would be impossible for example to express the beauty of the Venus of Milo in a series of general statements about aesthetic relations.) The critic may say that causal relations deal with objective facts, while aesthetic generalizations deal with fashions in human opinion. Yet an unbiased examination will show a remarkable analogy between the two. Certain repetitions in our sense data are followed by reactions in our mind of two kinds; we find that one kind of sense-impression is repeatedly followed by another kind of sense-impression, and our reaction is to call it a causal law; we find that one kind of sense datum repeatedly goes well with another kind of sense datum and it is reasonable to call it an aesthetic law. It is true that we have more general statements of the former kind than of the latter, and that they are more widely accepted. This may be due to various

factors, our lack of interest in aesthetic relations, their greater obscurity and the apparent fact that they have a more limited range than causal relations.

What the view of moral law as a law of nature maintains is that there are in the universe other kinds of universal relations which we may call moral relations. Just as we say that a certain event is always followed by a certain other event, or that a certain colour always goes well with a certain other colour, so we may say that a certain action is always the right action for a certain kind of person in certain circumstances. In the circumstances of answering a question a true answer is always the right or morally fitting answer to give, or in the circumstances of a child receiving a command from his parents the action which involves obedience is always the right or morally fitting action. This type of fact is just as much a part of the nature of the universe as the relation of cause and effect between events or the relation of harmony between two notes in music. As in the other cases, it is the work of human minds to discover moral relations and to express them in general statements which we call laws. But in all three cases the relations are really there, and are not mere figments of the human mind as the subjectivists say. It is important to realize that in the case of moral relations also, the similarity between various right actions which enables us to make moral laws about them is not the whole story. There is often in a right action an aspect of uniqueness, and in some cases its rightness or moral value lies in the unique aspect of the action and not in the aspects which it shares with similar actions. There is an analogy between the three kinds of relations in still another respect. An actual event in the physical world commonly requires more than one scientific law to explain it. The growth of a tree, for example, is explained only to a small extent by the law of gravitation; there are other causes at work and the statement of their effects will be in the form of biological laws. Similarly, in deciding the rightness of an action more than one moral law will often have to be taken into account, and this is one reason why there are such doubtful cases in morality as whether a doctor ought to give a patient a true answer which is likely to injure the patient's health.

A metaphysical theory would require to determine whether there is any connexion between the causal relations discovered by the sciences and the moral relations with which ethics deals. Obviously a moral law cannot say that a certain action is the right one to do in those circumstances where physical conditions make it impossible for the agent to do this action. For example, under present conditions it cannot be my duty to visit my friend in China who is ill and to return to Britain in time for an engagement here this evening, although with changed conditions of transport such a course of action may become a man's duty in the future. If my friend were living in the same city as myself it would very probably be my duty so to visit him. Supporters of the view that moral laws are laws of nature may go much further than this. They may say that, as nature is a unity, there are likely to be analogies between causal laws and moral laws, between what actually happens and what ought to happen, for both are parts of the same scheme of things. It has been more than once suggested in this book that self-sacrifice is both something that does happen very widely throughout the physical universe and something that ought to happen in the moral life of mankind. The natural laws which state that the seed dies in order to produce a new plant or that the maternal instinct impels the mother bird to save the lives of her young at the cost of her own life have some analogy with the moral laws which bid a man lay down his life for his friends. If two hypotheses were to prove valid they would strengthen this analogy, but here they are given as unconfirmed hypotheses. (a) If scientific laws are, as some philosophers hold, statements of tendencies rather than statements of what always happens, then moral laws have an even closer resemblance to scientific laws than they had on the older view. (b) If the universe is, as idealists hold it to be, more mental than material in its structure, then the relations among its parts may be more like the mental relations of cause and effect, that were mentioned at the beginning of this section, than physical relations, and it appears as if it would be somewhat easier to fit relations of rightness into the total scheme of things.

The theory of evolution has emphasized another aspect of the universe than that dealt with by the causal laws of science.

The course of natural history and the course of human history are regarded as processes of development, and the nature of this development appears to be a matter of great importance for ethics. If the process of evolution is, as the earlier evolutionists held, entirely determined by merely natural causes, then of course it may have no relevance for morality, except in determining the conditions under which the moral life has to be lived. If, however, as some of the more modern views of evolution suggest, there is some 'steer' or cosmic purpose in evolution, and we can say with Tennyson that 'through the ages one increasing purpose runs', then our human purposes may have to find a coherent place in that cosmic purpose. Indeed, there are thinkers who would say that the only reasonable theory of ethics is a teleological one holding that actions are right when they are directed to the ends to which the course of evolution points. If, again, we accept with Bergson and his followers a theory of creative evolution, it may be that one of the ways in which an action is right is that it is an expression of the creative impulse in a new direction. It is possible to combine these theories and to suppose that there is at the same time one or more purposes towards which the development of the universe is directed and also a creative urge at work showing itself in new and unique creations both of new means towards the fulfilling of existing purposes and of new purposes themselves. One of the purposes of the process of evolution may be to give this creative urge fuller scope for its expression. If this or a similar view of evolution be correct it may be at least part of the business of right actions to 'drive on the system of life', the reason that Dr. Johnson once gave for engaging in action.[1] There would be, in this case, a new and closer relation between the scientific laws of nature at work in the course of evolution and the laws of morality. This does not mean that it is necessary to regard the laws of morality as on the same level as the generalizations of the natural sciences as the earlier teachers of evolutionary ethics tended to regard them. It means rather that we are regarding the laws of nature more in the way that moralists have regarded the laws of morality for we are implying that nature as a whole in all its aspects

[1] Boswell: *Life of Johnson,* Ch. 54.

is purposive and even creative. It is into a background of creative effort and purposes working towards fulfilment that our own moral struggles and aspirations are to be fitted.

Creative evolution suggests another aspect of morality which monistic theories of metaphysics have been in danger of ignoring. If we hold with monistic idealism that the universe is fundamentally one, we are apt to ignore 'the many', and in particular the reality of the differences between different individuals. Monism is apt to suggest to the moralist that there is one single moral end, however complex and many-sided it may appear, at which every man ought always to be aiming. The inevitable result of such a view is to reduce the moral life to a single pattern, and this does appear to be one side of morality, and one that is also linked with the natural world. We saw in an earlier chapter that for every kind of animal and plant there appears to be an ideal nature, one that the descriptive scientist describes in his text-book, but to which the actual specimens found in nature are only imperfect approximations. An evolutionist may even maintain that the course of evolution has as one of its purposes the approximation to the perfect type for a particular kind of animal or plant. Since the time of Aristotle there has been a similar view in ethical theory. The good man is the man in whom the characteristics which make a man to be a man receive adequate expression. The fact that man is self-conscious and so can deliberately aim at his own self-realization makes him different from the other animals, and, as was suggested earlier in this chapter, if man is immortal this self-realization becomes a matter of far greater importance. One side of goodness certainly seems to be the realization of a human nature that is common to all men. Room must also be found, however, for the view that the good life is a life in which unique personalities are developed and in which new forms of goodness appear. This adds great complications to an ethical theory, for the unique does not admit of generalizations and so far does not lend itself to scientific treatment at all. In this respect ethics must take the side of the pluralists in metaphysics, for a universe which is to provide for this creative kind of morality must have open possibilities and opportunities for what is new and

unpredictable. Once again there is something corresponding to this in biological evolution; the course of evolution may lead to the development of a more perfect dog in the sense of a 'doggier' dog; it also leads to a great variety of new kinds of dog.

Accordingly the universe suggested by our moral theory, and we are only making the most tentative of suggestions, is a universe with room for other kinds of universal laws than the causal laws of natural science. It is a universe which at the same time has purposes to achieve in the course of a real development in time, and is creative in the sense of producing from time to time things that are new and unique and unpredictable. There are in the course of its development two complementary tendencies, that towards the perfection of existing types and that towards the production of unique individuals. Of current metaphysical theories, idealism in its less intellectualist forms is certainly the one which would suit our theory best, but it is an idealism which must give a larger place to the many unique individuals and more opportunity for creativeness than most idealistic theories have given. If the universe is of such a kind, then it is possible to go back to the old view of the moral life as the life 'convenient to nature'.

§4. *Religion and Morality*

Religion may be defined as the belief in a supernatural reality which affects the believer emotionally in such a way as to impel him to perform certain acts directed towards the supernatural reality. Historically there has been a very close connexion between morality and religion, for it is likely that religious customs were recognized as such by men before moral customs were distinguished from them, and in this way morality may be said to have developed from religion. The distinction was gradually made between duties which were primarily directed towards one's fellow human beings and duties which were primarily directed towards God. The duties to one's fellow-men, however, continued to be regarded as duties which God commanded, and so, even up to the present day, morality and religion have to a great extent enjoined the same duties. In the

higher religions there is an explicit recognition that to obey the laws of morality takes a high place among religious duties. The Hebrew prophets taught this, when they maintained that God requires instead of rites and sacrifices, that men should 'do justly and love mercy'.[1] It is true that there have been cases where immoral rites are practised as a part of religious ritual but this has by no means been the general rule. Religious experience with its emphasis on the supernatural and mysterious and its strong emotions is exceedingly liable to abnormal perversions and the religious attitude is apt to be exploited by the unscrupulous claimant to supernatural powers. Religion is also very conservative and tends to preserve customs that are no longer socially advantageous. Factors like these are probably sufficient to explain those cases in which religion has enjoined what morality has condemned. There appears also to be some justification for the view that the more religious an individual or a society is, the more moral the individual or the society will also be. This correlation may seem to be disproved by the fact that a decline in religion does not in many historical cases appear to be followed by an immediate decline in morality, but in most cases this decline comes somewhat later. People continue for a period to observe the customs of their fathers without holding the religious beliefs on which these customs are based, but after a time the customs too are neglected and the moral code enjoining them falls into disuse. Large sections of mankind at present appear to be giving up the moral codes handed down from the past in this way.

However closely religion and morality are connected, there are certain well-defined differences between them:[2]

(a) Religion includes a wider range of duties than morality. Worship, prayer and the observance of rites and sacraments are among the most important of religious duties, but morality has only an indirect concern with such duties in so far as they affect a man's conduct in relation to his fellow-men. The fact that they do have such an indirect moral influence is demonstrated by the way in which primitive peoples use such

[1] Micah vi. 8.

[2] cf. De Burgh: *The Relations of Morality to Religion.*

religious rites in instructing and initiating their youths in their moral duties as adult members of the tribe. The religious man would, however, be the first to maintain that the primary purpose of such duties is not moral and man-directed but religious and God-directed. Along with these distinctively religious duties, most of the higher religions enjoin all those duties which are enjoined by morality, and even give to them the highest place among religious duties.

(b) Religion is more characteristically an emotional experience than morality. This is the difference that was expressed by Matthew Arnold's famous definition of religion as 'morality touched by emotion'.[1] It is difficult, however, to say exactly what the emotion is which distinguishes religious experiences from other experiences. It may be described as the feeling of tremendous mystery which Otto has called the 'numinous' or the awe felt in the presence of holiness, and, in spite of what Otto says, this holiness, even in primitive conceptions, includes a certain moral holiness—a fact that is of considerable interest to moralists.[2] In the case of the higher religions at any rate the emotion may be described as an intense feeling of personal loyalty to God. It may be described again as the emotion of subjection or negative self-feeling which McDougall finds in the instinct of self-abasement. This emotion seems often to distinguish a religious action from a moral action of the same outward appearance. The merely moral man does a good action, for example a piece of social service, feeling that he is doing it on his own and in his own strength, and in doing it his instinct of self-assertion with its positive self-feeling is finding an expression. The religious man does the same action, regarding himself as the feeble instrument of God's beneficent power, and his attitude is one of abasing himself before the will of God. It is difficult to see this distinction in concrete cases. Many religious people are sufficiently irreligious to feel that they themselves are doing the good action. The religious feeling may, in other cases, become associated by conditioning with the moral action. Kant, who said that 'morality . . . in no way needs religion for its support' also said that the moral law aroused

[1] Arnold: *Literature and Dogma*, Ch. 1, §ii.

[2] Otto: *Idea of the Holy*, p. 53.

in him a feeling of awe, which is very like, if not identical with, the characteristic religious emotion.

(c) De Burgh has pointed out that while religion implies conduct as well as knowledge (in a very wide sense of the word), for religion knowledge is all-important, and action is for the sake of knowledge.[1] For morality, on the other hand, knowledge is merely a means to better action, necessary, as Socrates and his followers recognized, but instrumental to action. The religious life is essentially knowing God; 'this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God'.[2] This does not mean that religion is identical with theology, the philosophical study of God, any more than that morality is identical with ethics, the theoretical study of right conduct. Indeed it has often been the case with religion that its special knowledge has been hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes in understanding. The higher religions describe religious knowledge by the word 'faith'; it is certainly not logical inference; it is not commonly the mystic vision, although it generally implies a simpler kind of intuition; it is always touched with emotion as we saw in the last paragraph, and is probably analogous to sympathy, a mental state in which both understanding and feeling are present. Just as the sympathetic man understands what others are suffering and feels for them, so the religious man understands the will of God, and feels a submissive awe to that will. The practical duties of religion are to a large degree instrumental in their value for it is through worship, prayer and sacrament that we attain to the awareness of the supernatural which we call the knowledge of God. Some thinkers go further than this and say that while morality is concerned only with a man's conduct, religion is concerned with his whole personality.

(d) Religion has its centre in God; morality has its centre in man. This distinction has already been suggested by the different emotional attitudes which we find in morality and in religion. It is conceivable that there may be a purely humanistic morality which contains no reference to the supernatural

[1] De Burgh: *The Relations of Morality to Religion*, III. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. XXI, p. 85.

[2] John xvii. 3.

although we shall suggest in the sequel that this would be a very limited morality. Ethical societies have in the last century often presented such a morality, and Buddhism long ago tried to be such a morality but found human nature too much for it and became a religion. Religion, however, would lose its essential nature if all reference to the supernatural were excluded from it. The fact that religion tries to see the universe from the direction of God gives to the morality which is inspired by religion a universality that non-religious morality may sometimes lack; there have been thinkers who appear to confine morality to a single state. Again and again in our study we have referred to a man's society or community or group as the sphere of his moral duties, but religion in its higher forms reminds us that this community is no particular state or nation. It is as wide as humanity, for such religion teaches us the brotherhood of man; it is even wider, for religion thinks of a fellowship of conscious beings in heaven as well as on earth.

In view of these four differences between morality and religion the question may be asked whether morality requires the support of religion or whether morality, as we know it, can exist permanently without religion. History shows us that it certainly can do so with no great appearance of harm to itself for limited periods, and it is possible that something in the way of morality may exist permanently without a supporting religion. There are, however, several reasons for thinking that morality without religion would be very different from what it has been in the past and that some of its very highest forms would disappear altogether. These reasons, by a different turn of expression, are those which make the existence of God a postulate of the useful if not of the necessary kind in ethics.

The following are some of the ways in which religion appears to be involved in morality.

(a) Morality implies a certain metaphysical outlook, at least a belief in the existence of individual selves who are in some sense the doers of their own actions, in the reality of time and in the existence of evil, and gains from certain other philosophical beliefs. For most men this outlook is provided

by their religion. The ordinary man does not study technical metaphysics, but he has none the less a metaphysical outlook on the universe, without which his moral rules would not make sense. This metaphysical outlook, however simple or crude, is largely supplied by religion.

(b) Religion gives objectivity to moral values. There is throughout moral thought a haunting fear that good and evil may be mere imaginations of the human mind, that the moral struggle is illusory and that the real universe bears no relation to our human opinions. In religion, however, man has a guarantee that the moral struggle is a real one in which God, as creator and supporter of the universe, is concerned and that His moral laws are as much the laws of nature as any of those with which the natural sciences deal.

(c) Morality implies an impulse or initiative from something that is beyond nature. This is the view of those who say that the voice of conscience is the voice of God within us. Whether we accept this view or not, we must admit that there is in our human nature an urge towards what is higher and better which can never be explained in merely natural terms. There is more in living than the satisfaction of our animal instincts; there is what may be called figuratively an 'instinct' to be better, to reach something new in the way of good action, an aspiration, as we said in an earlier chapter, 'For the man to arise in me, that the man that I am may cease to be'.

(d) Morality implies a personal loyalty rather than obedience to an impersonal law. Our attitude to a law that we regard as a moral law is very different from our attitude to a political law concerned primarily with a non-moral matter, such as a law restricting the movement of people from one place to another in time of war. The political law must be obeyed because we see the use of obeying it, or because we wish to avoid the penalty for breaking it, or because we hold that it is a moral duty to obey all the laws of our country however stupid they may be. On the other hand, a moral law is to be obeyed in the way that the wish of a friend is to be obeyed. If we fail to obey it, we fail in something that is very like a personal obligation. The nature of this obligation in morality is admittedly obscure, but perhaps the most

reasonable explanation of it is the religious one that we owe an obligation to a personal God.

(e) There is something other-worldly about morality at its highest. It has already been suggested that the immortality promised to believers by many religions gives a new significance to morality, by making the moral struggle worth while and by making it reasonable to attribute great intrinsic value to each human personality. Morality is at the same time other-worldly in a different way. The good man has his affections set not on the things of this visible world and on the satisfaction that can be obtained from material things, but in a realm that is in some sense more spiritual. It is true that we know this spiritual realm most readily as it embodies itself in material things, in the truths expressed in words, in the beauty of nature and of art, and in goodness expressed in noble deeds. Yet in all these things as we know them there is an incompleteness which leaves our highest aspirations imperfectly satisfied. Bradley thought that morality by its very nature implied an unsolved contradiction between self-realization and altruism, and Spinoza in his *Ethica* found the highest level of morality in the intellectual love of God, a level where morality has been transformed into religion. It is the faith of the religious man that this incompleteness which characterizes every human endeavour in art and in philosophy as well as in morality is not the whole of the story. This life is related to the life of eternity, which is known however dimly in religion, as the 'arc to the perfect round'.

Chapter XVIII

THE LANGUAGE OF ETHICS [1]

§1. *The Use of Language*

'Expressions may be grammatically similar and yet logically different.'[2] The sentence, 'A puppy is a young dog', is similar in grammatical construction to the sentence, 'A puppy is a nuisance in the house', but while the former expresses a definition of the English word, 'puppy', the latter expresses a fact learned by observation and, in part, an emotional reaction to it. Mr. Bertrand Russell, following Frege, was one of the first British philosophers to show that the 'apparent logical form of the proposition need not be its real form', and Wittgenstein showed, by a logical analysis of the language used, that many philosophical questions do not admit of answer, because they are senseless questions. (An example of an obviously senseless question is, 'Is the Absolute red or yellow?') Professor Gilbert Ryle summed up the view of those influenced by this type of philosophy when he said in 1932, 'The main business of philosophy is the detection of the sources in linguistic idiom of recurrent misconceptions and absurd theories.' The application of this type of philosophy to the language of ethics was made more or less incidentally by Russell, Carnap and Ayer, but the first systematic treatment of the language of ethics was Professor C. L. Stevenson's *Ethics and Language*, first published in 1945. This work has been continued by others, to whom we shall refer as 'philosophers of language', and, in view of their work, every future writer on ethics will need to consider how ethical language is used in a far more thorough way than did either the idealists of the late nineteenth century or the intuitionists of the early twentieth century.

We may regard words as tools, primarily tools for different

[1] For books used in this chapter, see p. 372.

[2] A. G. N. Flew: *Logic and Language, First Series*, p. 7.

sorts of communication, but also tools for constructive thinking. We may accordingly distinguish between different kinds of sentences by considering the jobs they are used for. Before discussing the kinds of language used in ethics it may be helpful to give examples of a few types used in ordinary conversation:

(a) *Prescriptive language*, consisting of commands, imperatives and the like,—'sentences with the intention of telling someone what to do', e.g. 'Shut the door'; 'Thou shalt not steal'; 'Troops will disembark at 08.00 hours'; 'I want you to write this letter'; (where this is used not to tell one's own state of mind but to lead to the writing of the letter).

(b) *Emotive language*, consisting of words or sentences with the functions of expressing or evoking emotional attitudes, e.g. 'Alas!'; 'It's smashing!'; 'Fancy that!'; 'The Tory government's reactionary policy has thrown the nation's road transport system to the capitalistic wolves'; 'The liberal policy of a free-enterprise party has restored to our road transport system the initiative of business men.' (These last two examples, which contain a common statement, as well as different emotive expressions, may be largely replaced by the sentences, 'The government has denationalized road transport—what a shame!' and 'The government has denationalized road transport—how splendid!').

(c) *Descriptive language*, consisting of 'statements', sentences with the intention of passing on information. The most common type is the 'sentence with the intention both of telling you what to believe and of letting you know that I believe it myself';[1] e.g. 'Clouds are often followed by rain'; 'A puppy is a young dog'; 'If you want to see the largest city in Scotland, go to Glasgow'; (where this is used not to direct the hearer to go to Glasgow but to tell him the size of the city).

(d) *Interrogative language*, consisting of questions, sentences with the intention of evoking a statement or a command from the hearer, e.g. 'What is the colour of a blackbird's legs?'; 'What shall I do to be saved?'; 'You didn't speak to him at the meeting?'

There are, of course, many other kinds of language, some of which will concern us later, but these will illustrate the points that have now to be made. For each of these four kinds of language there is one characteristic grammatical form,

[1] R. B. Braithwaite in *Mind*, Vol. LXIII, p. 254.

—a verb in the imperative mood for prescriptive language, an interjection for emotive language, a verb in the indicative mood for descriptive language, and a sentence beginning with an interrogative pronoun or adjective for interrogative language; we have shown this characteristic form in the first example in each case.

For each kind of language, however, other grammatical forms are also frequently used, as in some of our later examples. The same form, e.g. 'You didn't speak to him at the meeting', may be, in different contexts and with different intonations, a question, a statement, or an emotive expression. It is clear too from our last two examples of emotive language that a single sentence may do the work of two kinds of language at the same time; it is indeed in such two-function sentences that emotive language is most often found.

Statements have had in philosophy a prestige denied to other kinds of language; they are 'the sole vehicle of Truth',[1] 'the proper indicative sentences . . . somehow above suspicion in a way that other sorts of sentence are not'.[2] Statements are sentences to which the words 'true' and 'false' are directly applicable, and it is thought that philosophy to be worthy of the name must, like science, consist of true statements. From what we have shown of other kinds of language being sometimes expressed in sentences in the indicative mood, (e.g. 'It's smashing'; 'Troops will disembark at 08.00 hours'), it is clear that we may easily make the mistake of regarding such sentences as 'true' or 'false'. This, indeed, according to the philosophers of language, is one of the most common mistakes made in dealing with the language of ethics.

Many of the earlier philosophers of language held what is called the 'verificationist theory of meaning', which may be simply if not quite adequately expressed in Professor Ayer's statement that a sentence has literal meaning if and only if the proposition it expresses is either analytic or empirically verifiable.[3] (An analytic proposition is one that it would be self-contradictory to contradict, because of the rules of language, e.g. 'Triangles are three-sided'; an empirically verifiable proposition is one the truth or falsity of which can be confirmed directly or indirectly by observation, e.g. 'It will rain here

[1] P. H. Nowell-Smith: *Ethics*, p. 21.
[2] R. M. Hare: *The Language of Morals*, p. 8.
[3] A. J. Ayer: *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 5.

tomorrow.') Those who, like the present writer, do not hold this theory but believe that there are other kinds of meaningful propositions, which may be expressed in true or false statements, have sometimes tended to reject all the work of the philosophers of language. It is by no means necessary to do so: it is possible to engage in a logical study of the language of morals without accepting the 'verificationist principle'.[1]

§2. *The Language used in Ethics*

Most people take it for granted that the sentences which they find in text-books on ethics, e.g. 'To speak the truth is right'; 'Stealing is bad'; 'One ought to pay one's debts', are statements which can be described as true, without believing that these statements are analytic or verifiable by way of observations. Indeed, when an apparently ethical sentence is readily verified by observation, we may suspect that it is not an ethical sentence at all. Mr. Hare's Indian Army Major, who makes the apparently ethical statement, 'Plunkett is a good fellow,' is really saying, 'Plunkett plays polo, sticks pigs with élan and is not on familiar terms with educated Indians.'[2] All these three are descriptive statements, verifiable by observation, but they are not moral judgements. The words, which occur characteristically in moral judgements, have all non-ethical uses as well, as in the following sentences, 'Pick out the *good* apples'; 'Five of his sums were *right*, but the other two were *wrong*'; 'The weather *ought* to be better after Easter.'

In certain contexts moral judgements do the special jobs of three of the kinds of language mentioned in the last section, as well as another job, that of evaluation, to which we shall come in our next section. (a) When in reply to the question, 'Shall I make up a story, or shall I tell the truth?' someone answers, 'It is right to tell the truth,' the answer is prescriptive, and almost equivalent to the command, 'Tell the truth.' (b) When the spectator of a gallant action exclaims 'That was nobly done', his exclamation is largely an emotive expression, almost equal to applause. (c) When a clergyman writes in a testimonial that A. is a good girl, he is almost certainly making the statement by implication that A. attends

[1] This is well brought out in a review of A. N. Flew's '*Logic and Language*' by J. Holloway. *Mind*, Vol. LXII, p. 99.

[2] R. M. Hare: op. cit., pp. 146, 147.

Church and has certain qualities of character. Even if, unlike Mr. Hare's Army Major, the clergyman is still using 'good' as a moral term, his judgement is in part descriptive.

It is significant that in their characterization of ethical terms, the philosophers of language often refer to more than one use. Professor Stevenson's first pattern of analysis suggests that 'This is good' is synonymous with 'I approve of this; do so as well'.[1] Here the word 'good' is being used both to express an attitude of approval (in emotive language) and to give a command (in prescriptive language). Professor Ayer similarly wrote, 'Ethical terms do not serve only to express feeling. They are calculated also to arouse feeling, and so to stimulate action. Indeed some of them are used in such a way as to give the sentences in which they occur the effect of commands.'[2] Here again there is an emotive use and a prescriptive use.

It looks as if words in ethics are very troublesome. The same words are used in ethical and non-ethical sentences, and even in ethical sentences they may be used for different jobs and for two or three jobs at the same time. In the logical analysis of such words—we shall use 'good', which is the most troublesome, as an example—three methods may be used: (a) It may be said that 'good' has different meanings, and that it is used with one meaning in ethics, and with another meaning in such an activity as the marking of essays by a teacher. This has been the course taken by most writers on ethics in the past, but it ignores what is common, and indeed the similar difficulties which have to be faced in the different uses of the word 'good'. These common elements have been fully brought out in the writings of Mr. Hare and Mr. Urmson. Even if we lay aside all non-ethical uses, we have still to face the different jobs for which the word 'good' is used in ethics. (b) We may look for a common element in all the uses, and regard this as the total meaning of the term. This is presumably what the Oxford English Dictionary is doing when it defines 'good' as 'the most general adjective of commendation', but 'commendation' is itself a vague and possibly ambiguous word, and in some uses, the word 'good' appears to have lost almost all sense of commendation; a 'good load' is simply a large load. (c) While accepting the sense of

[1] C. L. Stevenson: *Ethics and Language*, p. 81.
[2] A. J. Ayer: *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 108.

commendation as basic, we may attempt to extend the meaning of 'good' in the different spheres in which it is used. One way of doing this is by stating the criteria or standards, on the basis of which commendation is given in each sphere. There may be other ways; Professors Ayer and Stevenson, for example, have both suggested in the passages just quoted, that when the word 'good' is used in moral contexts, there is a prescriptive element in its use. I do not think there is the same prescriptive element in the word 'good' when it is applied to the grading of apples.

Indeed the philosophers of language are fully alive to the varying uses of ethical terms, but many of them are inclined to deny that *quâ* ethical terms they can have a descriptive use at all. This is in part a reaction from the intuitionist view of moral knowledge 'as knowledge that a certain object has a certain characteristic',[1] and in part due to the limitation given to meaningful statements by those who accept the verificationist principle. So we find Professor Braithwaite saying that 'the essential thesis of a "noncogitive" theory of ethics is to maintain that the specifically moral sense of "ought" is not descriptive',[2] or Professor Ayer saying, 'Ethical predicates are not factual; they do not describe any feature of the situation to which they are applied.'[3] What seems to me clear, on the other hand, is that if we use ethical words merely as emotive or as prescriptive, we are not using our tools in the most efficient way. If our purpose in saying 'This is good' is merely 'I approve of this; do so as well', the better tools for our purpose would be the words, 'I approve of this: do so as well'. These are simple words, and do not raise the same number of questions as the word 'good'. To me there appears to be something more in the word 'good', and it may be this something more which philosophers of language are seeking, when like Professor Stevenson they give two acceptable patterns of analysis, or include in a definition more than one use.

Some of the philosophers of language too in their eagerness to preserve the flexibility of ethical language and to ensure that their theories are reflecting the ordinary use of words forget that it is the business of both science and philosophy

[1] P. H. Nowell-Smith: op. cit., p. 39.

[2] *Mind*, Vol. LXIII, p. 257.

[3] *Horizon*, Vol. 20, p. 174.

to modify the uses of language so that words may become more efficient tools for the purposes for which they are used. No physicist uses the words 'atom' or 'force' in the vague, ambiguous way they are used in common speech, and however much the student of ethics wants for the business of exhortation to keep in touch with common speech, he will need to reach a technical, standard use of terms. Mr. Hare gives a good example of the kind of thing I mean in the 'analytical model' in the last chapter of his book,[1] in which he constructs a model language, defining certain artificial moral words in terms of a modified imperative mood. Mr. Hare says that 'this model is not to be taken too seriously', but it is the kind of thing that philosophers of language should be doing very seriously.[2] It is notorious that one can use a chisel as a screw-driver, with disastrous results to the chisel; one suspects that Mr. Hare's Army Major is doing a similar damage to the word 'good' when he calls Plunkett 'a good fellow', and the vagaries of popular usage are constantly spoiling the words we use as tools in ethical judgements. It is the business of the philosophers of language to decide on their proper use, and to see to it, as far as in them lies, that they are properly used.

§3. *Evaluative Language in Ethics*

A group of activities in which men use the words 'good' and 'bad' includes choosing, preferring, approving, commending, and grading. In the opinion of some thinkers, 'the central activities for which moral language is used are choosing and advising others to choose'. In these activities we shall say that language is used evaluatively, and we shall, following closely an article by Mr. J. O. Urmson,[3] deal with a simple and often non-ethical activity of this type, that of grading. We must not confuse it with the other activities we mention in the last section. As Mr. Urmson puts it, 'To describe is to describe, to grade is to grade, and to express one's feelings is to express one's feelings, and . . . none of these is reducible to either of the others: nor can any of them be reduced to, defined in terms of anything else.'

[1] R. M. Hare, op. cit., ch. 12.

[2] See F. Waismann: *Analytic-Synthetic* in *Analysis*, Vol. X, p. 25; Vol. XI., pp. 25, 49 and 115; Vol. XIII, pp. 1 and 73.

[3] 'On Grading', *Essays on Logic and Language, Second Series*, p. 159.

Grading is a familiar activity in many spheres of life. Mr. Urmson's chief example is the grading of apples for the market, where we might use as 'grading labels' or adjectives to apply to the different grades 'good', 'indifferent' and 'bad', although the trade prefers the more specialized labels of 'super', 'extra fancy' and the like. Grading is not classification; it is not, for example, the sorting of apples into Blenheims, Bramleys and Worcesters, where the language used is entirely descriptive. In grading the language is evaluative, and in contrast to classification, we are preferring one grade to another. It is true that the 'grading labels' are often highly emotive words as in the examples we have given, but the actual activity of grading would be no different if we were to use the labels 'X grade', 'Y grade', 'Z grade', provided that one grade is preferred to another. In activities like the grading of apples the criteria for deciding the grade of an apple are clearly defined in a series of descriptive statements about size, shape, colour, ripeness and absence of blemish. There is no precise set of criteria for 'good' motor cars, still less for 'good' poems.[1] The reasons why 'good' as a grading-label is so very widely used appear to be both that the criteria for its application are very general and that a different set of criteria is used in each different context—one set for apples, another for motor cars, and another for moral agents. Mr. Urmson points out that it is possible in the case of apples for a beginner to carry out the task of grading by imitating or obeying the instructions of an experienced grader without knowing anything about the purpose of the grading or people's attitudes to apples. This may suggest a similar second-hand use by many people of terms used in moral grading.

When we consider the grading of apples, we may think that the criteria are based on people's likes and dislikes, so that when we label an apple 'good' all we are saying is that people like large, rosy, sweet apples of the kind that are put in the 'good' grade. Any capable grader will say, however, that there can be right and wrong opinions about good apples, and that the grades which he uses are determined by objective criteria, and not by anything as variable as people's likings. Still there can be little doubt that it was people's likings which originally determined the criteria of a good apple or a good cheese. 'It is a fact that there is a stable majority, who

[1] R. M. Hare: op. cit., pp. 122, 129.

prefer, like, choose cheese with the characteristics A, B, C. Then A, B, C, become the characteristics which are accepted even by the minority for grading cheese.' If the likings and choices of the stable majority change, there will follow after a time-lag a change in the criteria. In the case of the criteria for grading cheese Mr. Urmson thinks that this account is 'just about right'. In other kinds of grading the criteria are less clearly defined and more in dispute, and it is impossible to give such a straight-forward account of their origin.

We do not customarily use the term 'grading' in ethics, but Mr. Urmson's argument is that in speaking of men and of their actions as good and bad and, less commonly, indifferent, and even in speaking of men as rash, brave and cowardly, we are grading. For in doing so, we are 'approving', 'selecting' and 'choosing'—activities which have a similar pattern to that of Mr. Urmson's grading. How does what we may call 'moral grading' differ from the grading of apples? There are no explicitly laid down criteria for grading men and their actions like the specifications which the Ministry of Agriculture in Britain has laid down for 'super'-grade apples. The 'standards' which occupy so much of this book are criteria by another name, and the students of ethics, who might have been expected to lay down specifications have clearly had difficulty in doing so, and have commonly differed among themselves. (One thing that they may learn from the graders of apples is that a 'standard' may require several descriptive statements as its specifications, not a single one as they have so often attempted.) Moreover, in grading apples we know very clearly what people are to do with them: the proof of the apple is the eating of it, and this immediately reduces the number of criteria to workable limits. We have no such easily ascertainable limits in the grading of men and their actions. In common speech, different criteria are used for grading a man as good in different contexts: we think again of the Army Major's 'good fellow' and the somewhat unusual criteria employed by him. Similarly the criteria used have varied in different ages and countries; in post-war Britain Aristotle's 'magnificence' is scarcely a criterion of the good man. Again the relative importance of motives and external actions will vary in different contexts in their use as criteria; the motive will figure more largely in the criteria used by a father confessor than in the criteria used by a policeman.

Moral grading differs from other kinds of grading in its importance. 'Moral grading affects the whole of one's life and social intercourse.' This surely suggests that while the ordinary activity of grading has a clear purpose in view, and even an officer's grading of men as rash, brave and cowardly has in view the selection of men for some special duty, moral grading has no such clearly defined purpose. Mr. Urmson may mean that it has such a variety and complexity of purposes that these cannot be analysed. It appears to me that a moral grading with any single purpose in view is a biased grading, like the grading of an apple merchant whose sole aim is to sell apples of any quality at the largest price. There has to be an autonomy about moral grading; otherwise it is not moral.

Mr. Urmson points out rightly that in morality we have to decide between different sets of grading criteria; we have to grade our criteria. Here he uses the labels 'enlightened', 'unenlightened', 'higher' and 'lower' and suggests such criteria as the absence or presence of superstition, or the health, wealth and happiness of the people living under the moral code in question. The origins of criteria for 'enlightenment' are not so easily traced as the origins of the criteria for good cheese. One of the points in which criteria for moral goodness differ from the non-ethical grader's criteria may be that there is a unique relation between moral goodness and its criteria. We shall discuss this in §6.

Mr. Urmson concludes his article by saying that he does not regard 'right' and 'wrong' and cognate words as grading labels. This is important in its indication that in ethics we not only use evaluative or grading language, but other kinds of language as well.

§4. *Emotive Language in Ethics*

Some of the earlier philosophers of language held that the job of ethical language was 'to express feeling', to which 'to express commands' was soon added. They realized, however, that such a vague word as 'feeling' was not adequate. Professor Ayer added to the job of expressing feeling the job of arousing feeling, and so stimulating action.[1] By so doing, he added a prescriptive use to the emotive use of ethical terms.

[1] A. J. Ayer: *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 108.

Earl Russell replaced feelings by wishes: 'When a man says, "This is good in itself" . . . he means "Would that everybody desired this?" [1] Professor Stevenson used instead of the word 'feeling' the word 'attitude', which is not strictly defined, but includes 'purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires and so on'.[2] In his two patterns, the attitudes expressed are 'approval' and 'praise' ('a laudatory emotive meaning') respectively. There is obviously some confusion as to the feeling that is expressed in ethical terms.

Some general considerations may help us to deal with this confusion. (a) When ethical language is used seriously, and not merely conventionally, it is naturally emotive. 'We get stirred up about goodness of men because we are men,' says Mr. Hare, and again, 'Moral language is frequently emotive, simply because the situations in which it is typically used are situations about which we often feel deeply.' [3] It is the case too that people often use ethical terms for no other purpose than expressing their emotions, as in the common exclamation, 'That is too bad!' The question is not whether ethical terms are used emotively, but whether this use is part or whole of the use being made of them in distinctively moral judgements. Both Mr. Hare and Professor Braithwaite hold that 'feelings of approval',—even if expressed in ethical language, 'are irrelevant to moral judgements'. (b) The point is often made that in moral judgements we are expressing our feelings and not saying (in descriptive language) that we have them. As a matter of fact we are often doing both things at the same time. The words, 'Phew!' and 'I should say I am disgusted' may both be expressions of feelings, but they also may be in certain contexts descriptive statements, informing people of the fact of my disgust. What some of the philosophers of language affirm is that it is the expression and not the description which is the concern of ethics. (c) The words 'good' and 'right' and 'ought' are generally held to express a favourable attitude, what Mr. Nowell-Smith calls a 'pro-attitude'. This is true in the case of the word 'good', but when I say, 'I ought to write this letter', my attitude is sometimes at any rate a 'con-attitude' to writing, countered by a self-command to do it. I do not seem even to have a pro-attitude to the

[1] Quoted C. L. Stevenson: *Ethics and Language*, p. 265 n.

[2] C. L. Stevenson: op. cit., p. 3.

[3] R. M. Hare: op. cit., pp. 141, 144.

self-command in all cases unless my accepting of the self-command itself implies a pro-attitude. This suggests that while we may be using 'good' and 'bad' frequently as emotive terms in ethical contexts, it is less plausible to suppose that we are using 'right', 'wrong' and 'ought' as emotive terms. (d) The same term is often used with both an emotive and descriptive meaning at the same time, and this is sometimes true of ethical terms. Professor Stevenson has shown that the emotive meaning of a term may be dependent on or more or less independent of its descriptive meaning; we feel very differently about war-time 'controls' from what we do about 'self-control'. Changes in emotive meaning tend to lag behind changes in descriptive meaning; there are old people who still feel a strong antipathy to socialists, although they would have to describe socialists today in a very different way from those whom they described as wild revolutionaries fifty years ago.

What is the feeling or attitude expressed by 'good' in ethical contexts? Various answers have been given from Mr. Nowell-Smith's 'pro-attitude', 'which should not be restricted to any one pattern', to some peculiarly moral attitude or group of attitudes. 'The term "good," ' writes Professor Stevenson, 'is indefinable, then, if a definition is expected to preserve its customary emotive meaning. It has *no* exact emotive equivalent.' [1] Whether the word 'good' is in ethical contexts expressing a unique attitude, not felt in other contexts, is a question that can only be decided by introspection. My own experience suggests that there is no peculiarly moral feeling; what is peculiar is the prescriptive element in a sentence that might be otherwise a mere expression of feeling. Some, who have tried to name a peculiarly moral feeling, have called it 'approval' or 'moral approval', but approval is a term used in other ways than to express attitudes. When the Minister of Housing approves designs for Council houses, he is probably grading. When I approve of a plan at a meeting, my language is probably prescriptive.

Ethical language differs from purely emotive language in that it does not merely express an attitude: it implies that there is some reason for that attitude. This is, in part at any rate, the difference between saying 'I like this particular action', and 'I approve of this particular action' in a moral context. In our liking we are in the condition of Dr. Fell's

[1] C. L. Stevenson: op. cit., p. 82.

pupil, who said, 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell: The reason why I cannot tell,' and indeed there may be no reason at all. But when we approve of something, so that we can say it is good or right or someone ought to do it, then we imply that we have sound reasons for our approval.

The important task of emotive language in ethics is not to express attitudes but to persuade other people, and perhaps sometimes ourselves, to do what they ought to do. One good example of this is what Professor Stevenson calls 'persuasive definition'. In a persuasive definition, the descriptive meaning of a term is changed without any substantial change in its emotive meaning. The result is that the hearer, accepting the new definition of the term, is persuaded to extend the attitude expressed in the terms emotive meaning to something new. The election agent who convinces me by definition that 'patriotism' includes adherence to the principles of his party, has gone a long way to secure my approval and my vote. There are other means of persuasion, but the job of them all is to arouse feeling and so to stimulate action.

§5. *Prescriptive Language in Ethics*

'Ethics, as a special branch of logic, owes its existence to the function of moral judgements as a guide in answering questions of the form, "What shall I do?".'[1] The answers to such questions naturally take the form of prescriptive language which is the language used most obviously in commanding, but also in exhorting, advising, guiding and even commending, which has sometimes a hortatory force. While in activities of evaluating and expressing feeling people use most frequently the words 'good' and 'bad', in answering questions of the form 'What shall I do?', they use commonly sentences containing the words 'right' and 'wrong' and most of all 'ought'.

We shall begin with 'commands' which show prescriptive language in its simplest form, and which may occur in non-ethical as well as ethical contexts. The ordinary view is that the function of a command is to get somebody to do something, but Mr. Hare points out the difference between telling someone to do something and getting him to do it. We tell a person what he is to do in a command and then, if he is not

[1] R. M. Hare, op. cit., p. 172.

disposed to do it, start the 'totally different process of trying to get him to do it'. What is behind Mr. Hare's distinction is that the first step in trying to get a person to do something is a command in purely prescriptive language; in later steps one of two things happens; either the language becomes in part emotive and so persuasive, or reasons, often in descriptive language, are given for the command. Indeed other means of persuasion, verbal and physical, may be used, but only the first step is in ordinary persuasion wholly prescriptive.

Mr. Hare shows that commands—'sentences in the imperative mood'—resemble statements—'sentences in the indicative mood', in the fact that they can have logical relations to one another and can even be formally analysed in the patterns of Aristotelian logic. One of the difficulties that the philosophers of language have in denying that moral judgements are statements, is that to regard them as expressions of attitudes or feelings leaves them with no logical pattern. If, however, moral terms, even artificial moral terms, can be defined in terms of a modified imperative mood, as Mr. Hare does in his analytical model, then clearly we may proceed to ethical argument with something of the same logical security as we have in dealing with scientific statements.

Those philosophers of language who emphasize the prescriptive element in moral judgements do not mean that these judgements can be directly translated into commands in the imperative mood. Moral judgements differ from ordinary commands in the following way.

(a) Moral judgements are universal in a way that commands are not. In English our only imperative verb-forms are in the second person; and it is thus that commands are normally expressed. The artificial first and third person forms, 'Let me do this' or 'Let them do that', are really second-person imperatives used to request others not to impede the speaker or some other persons.[1] On the other hand it is possible to make moral judgements in any of the three persons; this is one reason why Mr. Hare in his analytical model has to use an enriched imperative mood. Again commands in the imperative mood normally refer only to the present or the immediate future, and Mr. Hare has devised an imperative mood to meet this also. Apparently universal commands like 'No smoking' in a railway compartment only

[1] S. E. Toulmin in *Philosophy*, Vol. XXIX, p. 67.

become *properly* universal when they are made with some general moral principle in mind.[1] Even when a particular piece of advice is given, as it often is, in the second person of the imperative mood, it is moral advice only when it is based on some universal principle. A doctor's injunction to a nurse not to tell a particular patient that he is dying is a *moral* prescription only if it is based on a universal prescription to permit lying rather than the aggravation of suffering in certain conditions.

(b) Professor Stevenson has pointed out that direct commands often arouse resistance, while a word like 'good' does not have this effect.[2] The direct command is often not as effective a tool of persuasion as the moral judgement, for it lacks those emotive meanings which arouse feelings and stimulate actions in others. There are cases where moral language does arouse resistance; a suggestion of 'piety' may hinder a young person from choosing a certain line of action.

(c) While the ordinary command, if sincerely given, has the single function of getting somebody to do something, moral judgements are more variable in their functions. Professor Stevenson gives the examples of a moral judgement being made simply to promote ethical discussion.[2]

(d) 'A man who gives a command is not logically bound to give any reasons why it should be obeyed': but when a man says, 'You ought to do this,' he implies that there are reasons for his advice being taken.[3] Such a moral judgement is addressed to a rational agent to help him to solve a problem of choice. Incidentally this is why moral judgements can never be completely identified with commands of God. The religious man can never question God's authority, and so *quâ* religious man cannot ask the reason why, but a moral judgement does not command a person to do something on the sole ground that he is told to do it. The relation between a moral judgement and the reasons for it will concern us in the next section.

(e) Just because a moral judgement is universal it is a command to the speaker himself as well as to others. This is not the case, when we give a moral exhortation insincerely, but to do so is an abnormal use of exhortation analogous to

[1] R. M. Hare: op. cit., p. 176.
[2] C. L. Stevenson: op. cit., p. 32.
[3] P. H. Nowell-Smith: op. cit., p. 191 f.

making a statement without believing it ourselves. In his analytical model, Mr. Hare makes the test for deciding whether the judgement 'I ought to do X' is a moral judgement, the recognition of the speaker that he himself must assent to the command, 'Let me do X.' [1] Some people doubt whether it is possible to give a command to oneself, but just as deliberation within a single mind is analogous to a discussion between two or more persons, so there may be a command given by one 'part' of the mind to another analogous to a command given by one person to another. Our lack of a first person imperative verb form may be one factor leading people to deny this. It is indeed one of the problems of moral psychology, how the moral command to oneself appears in the mind with such 'manifest authority'. Christians see in it the Holy Spirit, Hindus the universal spirit or Brahman within the individual spirit or Atman. In the language of modern existentialism 'the law is our essential being put against us, seeing we are estranged from it'.[2]

The fundamental data of ethics with Mr. Hare are not moral judgements in their prescriptive aspect, as much of his language suggests, but the personal decisions in which we subscribe to a moral principle. Even if a moral command sincerely given always implies that the giver must himself assent to the command, yet the assent or obedience is separable from the commanding. 'In the end, everything rests upon such a decision of principle', and decision is of 'the very essence of morals'.[3] Mr. Hare is here at one with the language of the existentialists.

Decision is not characteristically expressed in words. When words are used, they take the form of sentences in the indicative mood, pointing to or even describing the actions decided upon, as, for example, Joshua's 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'.[4] The characteristic expression of decision is action, and if decision be the very essence of morals, this suggests a limitation of the study of language in ethics. Still there are cases where language is used *performatively*, for example, 'I baptize this child'; 'I approve this plan'.

[1] R. M. Hare: op. cit., p. 168.
[2] Quoted from memory from Paul Tillich's Gifford Lectures.
[3] R. M. Hare: op. cit., pp. 69, 54.
[4] Joshua: xxiv. 15.

§6. *Descriptive Language in Ethics*

When one person says to another, 'This is a good motor-car,' and the second person already has some knowledge of motor-cars and the criteria by which cars are graded, then the speaker is to some extent describing the car in question. There is a similar descriptive capacity in ethical terms. We expect some qualities in the man who is described as a 'good' man, and the term will be more fully descriptive if we know the views of the speaker on such matters. In some contexts the ethical term may be both evaluative and descriptive : in others the evaluative meaning may be getting less, as in Mr. Hare's Army Major's 'good fellow'. This descriptive use is even more prominent in more specialized ethical language. When we call a man 'honest', we are not only expressing our evaluation or feeling of approval ; we are also describing the man's habits and attitudes.

It is sometimes said that an expression like 'a good driver', or 'a good auger' are entirely descriptive. To explain the meaning of such functional words we have to say what the object or individual is for, what it is supposed to do, and in describing that, we are explicitly describing 'the good auger' or 'the good driver'. Where such words differ from others is that in learning the meaning of these functional words, we are, as it were, 'being handed on a plate' the criteria of a good auger or a good driver.[1] There are no such *given* criteria for the most general ethical terms, but there are such when the term used is largely descriptive, as, for example, 'honest' or 'industrious'.

What philosophers of language have been at pains to deny is that 'This is good' is ever a descriptive statement analogous to the empirically verifiable statements, 'This is three feet long' or 'This is uranium'. In denying this, they tend to make certain assumptions which were certainly sometimes also made by the intuitionists whom they oppose, but which appear to be unnecessary, (a) They hold that when intuitionists call a thing 'good', they are attending to one single quality abstracted from the many qualities of an object in the same sort of way as students of optics abstract, for example, the 'redness' of the setting sun from all the other elements in the experience about which similar statements can be made, such

[1] R. M. Hare: op. cit., p. 100.

as its round shape and its luminosity. So 'goodness' is spoken of as a 'simple' quality or a 'resultant' or 'supravenient' quality or even 'a single ingredient to which we always refer when we call something good'.[1] Those who maintain that 'goodness' can be directly perceived might reasonably maintain that 'goodness' cannot be abstracted like 'redness' ; it belongs to the totality of the experience : it is not one quality resulting from or supravenient on the others ; it is a quality of the whole experience imbedded in and not resulting from the other qualities. Nor is it obvious—and our flexible use of language in moral contexts confirms the opinion—that goodness is a simple quality. For one thing it is a quality, even in its simplest usages, of an *action*, which is an object of perception more difficult to analyse than a material object. A more suitable analogue to 'goodness' than 'redness' in ordinary sense-perception might be 'discords' in music, also directly perceptible but a good deal more difficult to expound than 'redness'. (b) Philosophers of language think that the statement 'This is good' cannot be empirically verified in the way that the statement 'This is red' is verified. It is the contention of intuitionists that just as there is a stable majority who perceive discords in music, or who choose certain characteristics in cheeses, so there is a stable majority who perceive goodness in the same kind of actions, and it is from this stable majority that we can expect verification of our intuition. After all, there are colour-blind people who perceive red as no different from green, and, if we accept the Christian doctrine of original sin, we all have defects in our moral vision which make reliable verification difficult but not, I think, impossible. (c) Philosophers of language tend to believe that intuitionists ascribe infallibility to the statements in which they describe their intuition. Intuition is itself an emotive word that tends to carry over into its use in ethics the attitudes connected with it in mysticism and religion. Intuition is as fallible as perception, or perhaps more so. (d) It has been argued that if an object has a quality which can be described in a statement, this quality cannot be at the same time emotive or prescriptive or evaluative. I can see no reason why things and qualities may not be like words in this respect : our whole study has shown us that words can be used descriptively and emotively at the

[1] P. H. Nowell-Smith: op. cit., p. 180.

same time. (e) Philosophers of language appear to think that the experiences which moral intuitionists claim are unique and without parallel in any other sphere. But in the sphere of æsthetics and religion there are certainly parallel experiences, even more difficult to describe than the experience of goodness. It is just because the moral intuitionist has tried to describe these experiences with the rather inadequate tool of a language devised for other purposes that his descriptions can be so easily assailed. Religious people have been wise in calling their parallel experiences ineffable.

These considerations do not prove intuitionism; at most they weaken the critics' attack. Intuitionists would certainly be wrong if they claimed that the word 'good', for example, was only used to describe an intuition. The philosophers of language have shown that it is used in other ways. There does, however, appear to me to be a special experience for which people do use the term 'good' in a moral context. Some may think that the 'goodness' is in the 'peculiarly moral attitude', others in the object of the intuition. Psychologists have always taught the difficulty of distinguishing the objective from the subjective in emotional experiences.

There is another way in which descriptive language appears in ethical discussion. We have seen that criteria are implied in grading, and that reasons can be given for moral prescriptions and perhaps even for properly moral attitudes, and these criteria and reasons are often expressed in the form of statements. Some of them indeed would in other contexts be statements of descriptive science. We shall now consider how these statements may be related to the moral judgements connected with them.

(a) Moralists have sometimes spoken as if the moral judgement was logically entailed by the statements given as reasons or criteria. Hume, however, in a famous passage pointed out that we cannot pass from propositions where the copula is 'is' or 'is not' to propositions with the copula 'ought' or 'ought not'. Whatever be the relation between the reasons for a moral judgement and the moral judgement itself, it is not one of logical entailment.

(b) Naturalists have held that 'This is good' can be defined in terms of 'This has certain characteristics', for example, 'This is productive of the maximum possible amount of pleasure'. What is ordinarily thought of as a reason for

calling something good here becomes a definition of 'good'. This view was for many disproved by Professor Moore,[1] but it is possible for anyone who cares to ignore normal ethical usage to define 'good' in this way. Professor Stevenson in his second pattern at first sight may appear to do this: ' "This is good" has the meaning of "This has qualities or relations X, Y, Z", except that "good" has as well a laudatory emotive meaning . . .' He has guarded himself against Professor Moore's 'naturalistic fallacy' by including in his definition emotive meaning as well as descriptive meaning.

(c) Many of the philosophers of language seem to find only psychological connections of association and conditioning—contingent or matter of fact connections rather than logical relationships—between reasons or criteria and moral judgements. 'What are accounted reasons for our moral judgements are reasons only in the sense that they determine attitudes.'[2] This is the type of connections that Mr. Urmson has analysed in his consideration of the criteria of good cheese, although it will obviously be a good deal more complicated in ethical contexts. Mr. Hare would, I think, make decisions the ultimate data in the development of criteria.

(d) The long tradition of reason being held to be fundamental in ethics may be responsible for many people still holding that, although the relation between a moral judgement and the reasons for it is not one of logical entailment, it may still be another kind of logical relation. Lord Keynes similarly held that 'probability is an objective relation between propositions or events', although it is not a relation of logical entailment. Mr. Toulmin holds that there is a type of 'evaluative inference' by which we 'pass from factual reasons to an ethical conclusion',[3] but Mr. Hare thinks that this is done only by 'smuggling in the essential moral premises disguised as a rule of inference.[4] It may well be that both the proposers of such theories and their critics are keeping too close to the pattern of logical entailment.

Mr. Nowell-Smith gives as an example of illegitimate reasoning, 'The first foundation is the doctrine of God the

[1] See Chap. VI, §4, of this book.

[2] A. J. Ayer: *Analysis of Moral Judgements. Horizon*, Vol. 20, p. 175.

[3] S. E. Toulmin. *An Evaluation of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, pp. 38, 55 f.

[4] Review in *Philosophical Quarterly*, I, p. 374.

Creator. God made us and all the world. *Because of that* He has an absolute claim on our obedience. We do not exist in our own right, but only as His creatures who ought *therefore* to do and be what He desires.'[1] If the words in italics indicate logical entailment, the argument is obviously fallacious. Yet there is no question that many religious people, facing the whole of the facts summarily described in this passage, find no other conclusion reasonable than the one it contains—and it is difficult to find any logically cogent argument against it, except that it does not follow from the premises by way of logical entailment. This does not mean that the creative power of God alone provides intuitively a sufficient reason for the conclusion that we ought to obey Him, but that the full Christian account of God in descriptive language provides intuitively to *my* mind a sufficient reason. Here too we may call the inference of believers an intuition, while admitting that the word 'intuition' may be a cloak to cover our ignorance of the real nature of the relation. Such an intuition seems to me to be at least one factor in the relation of moral judgements to the reasons for them.

[1] Bishop Mortimer, *Christian Ethics*, p. 7.




Appendix

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The beginner who has completed an introductory course should as a next step read some of the standard works on ethics. The following order may be suggested: Plato's *Republic*, with Nettleship's lectures as a commentary; Aristotle's *Ethics*; Butler's *Sermons* (1, 2, 3, 11, 12); Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysic of Ethics* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, with Professor J. W. Scott's *Kant on the Moral Life* as a commentary; and Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*. Along with the three latter the reader would be well advised to read the relative sections of Professor Broad's *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, and a complete study of this book would make a satisfactory link between these standard works and more modern books on ethics. Of these the student may begin with Dr. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, Rashdall's *Theory of Good and Evil*, F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, and Sir David Ross's *Foundations of Ethics*.

In the following list, which makes no claim to completeness, standard works on ethics are denoted by capital letters, and certain easily-read modern books which the beginner may profitably read in his first year's study are marked with an asterisk. The classification under chapter headings indicates the subjects in which the writer has found each book most useful, but, in almost every case, the book may be profitably read as a whole.

Chapter I: THE NATURE OF ETHICS.

J. S. Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*. Introduction.
J. H. Muirhead: *Elements of Ethics*.
J. Seth: *Study of Ethical Principles*.
*G. E. Moore: *Philosophical Studies* (*The Nature of Moral Philosophy*).

*G. E. Moore: *Ethics* (Home University Library).
J. Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory.* Chapters 1, 2 and 12.
G. C. Field: *Moral Theory.*
*C. D. Broad: *Some of the Main Problems of Ethics.* (*Philosophy*, Vol. XXI, p. 99.)
H. W. B. Joseph: *Some Problems in Ethics.*

Chapter II. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MORAL ACTION.

(*a*) Psychology of Willing.

*W. McDOUGALL: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY.
Shand: *Foundations of Character.*
J. A. Hadfield: *Psychology and Morals.*
B. Bosanquet: *Psychology of the Moral Self.*
A. C. Mukerji: *The Nature of Self.*

(*b*) Freedom of the Will.

J. Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory.* Chapter 8.
W. D. Ross: *Foundations of Ethics.* Chapters 9 and 10.
C. D. Broad: *Determinism. Indeterminism and Libertarianism.*
*C. A. Campbell: *In Defence of Free Will.*
H. Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil.* Book III, Chapter 3.

Chapter III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALITY.

E. Westermarck: *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas.*
J. Dewey and J. H. Tufts: *Ethics.* Part I, Chapters 2 to 5.
L. T. Hobhouse: *Morals in Evolution.*
*M. Ginsberg: *Moral Progress* (Fraser Lecture).
*W. Trotter: *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War.*

Chapter IV. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MORAL JUDGEMENT.

J. BUTLER: SERMONS. 1 and 2.
(C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory. Butler.*)

A. SMITH: THE THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS.

(Selection in Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists.* Vol. I.)

J. MARTINEAU: TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORY.

(H. Sidgwick: *Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer and J. Martineau.*)

J. Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory.* Chapter 5.

W. D. Ross: *Foundations of Ethics.* Chapter 8.

Chapter V. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL THEORY.

H. Sidgwick: *Outlines of the History of Ethics for English Readers.*

Rogers: *Short History of Ethics.*

*S. Ward: *Ethics—An Historical Introduction* (World's Manuals).

C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (Concluding Chapter).

Chapter VI. RELATIVE, SUBJECTIVE AND NATURALISTIC THEORIES OF THE MORAL STANDARD.

*A. C. Ewing: *Subjectivism and Naturalism in Ethics. Mind.* N.S. Vol. LIII, p. 120.

D. HUME: TREATISE ON HUMAN NATURE. Section III.

D. HUME: INQUIRY CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS.

(C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory*: *Hume.*)

G. E. MOORE: PRINCIPIA ETHICA.

(H. J. Paton: *The Good Will.* Chapter 2 for criticism of *Principia Ethica.*)

C. H. Waddington: *Science and Ethics.*

E. Westermarck: *Ethical Relativity.*

J. Dewey: *Human Nature and Conduct.*

Chapter VII. THE STANDARD AS GIVEN BY INTUITION.

(*a*) Intuitionism.

H. J. Paton: *The Good Will*, pp. 135–145.
Sidgwick: *Methods of Ethics*. Book II.
Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*. Book I, Chapters 4 and 6.

(*b*) Moral Sense School.

SHAFTESBURY: CHARACTERISTICS.

SHAFTESBURY: INQUIRY CONCERNING VIRTUE.

(Selection in Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists*. Vol. I.)

F. HUTCHESON: SYSTEM OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

F. HUTCHESON: AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE ORIGINAL OF OUR IDEAS OF VIRTUE OR MORAL GOOD.

(Selection in Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists*. Vol. II.)
J. Bonar: *The Moral Sense*.
D. Daiches Raphael: *The Moral Sense*.

(*c*) Butler's Theory.

J. BUTLER: SERMONS (Ed. W. E. Gladstone).

*(Criticism by C. D. Broad in *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, and by A. E. Taylor in *Mind*. N.S. Vol. XXXIX.)

Chapter VIII. THE STANDARD AS LAW.

(*a*) The Nature of Moral Laws.

J. S. Mackenzie: *Manual of Ethics*. Book II, Chapter 3.
J. Laird: *A Study in Moral Theory*. Chapter 3.
H. Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*. Chapter 5.

(*b*) The Law of Nature.

R. Hooker: *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Book I.
*Dalby: *Catholic Concept of the Law of Nature*.
*C. S. Lewis: *Broadcast Talks*.

S. CLARKE: DISCOURSE UPON NATURAL RELIGION.

(Selection in Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists.* Vol. II.)

S. CLARKE: THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

(*c*) The Law of Reason.

H. J. Paton: *The Good Will.*

WOLLASTON: RELIGION OF NATURE DELINEATED.

(Selection in Selby-Bigge: *British Moralists.* Vol. II.)

(*d*) Kant.

KANT: CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON AND OTHER WORKS ON THE THEORY OF ETHICS. Trans. T. K. Abbott.

J. W. Scott: *Kant on the Moral Life.*

*C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory:* (*Kant*).

A. D. Lindsay: *Kant.*

H. J. Paton: *The Categorical Imperative.*

H. J. Paton: *The Moral Law or Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals.*

Chapter IX. THE STANDARD AS PLEASURE.

PLATO: PHILEBUS.

J. BENTHAM: INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION.

J. S. MILL: UTILITARIANISM.

H. SIDGWICK: METHODS OF ETHICS.

*(C. D. Broad: *Five Types of Ethical Theory: Sidgwick.*)

W. T. Stace: *The Concept of Morals.*

H. Rashdall: *The Theory of Good and Evil* (for 'Ideal Utilitarianism').

J. M. Keynes: *A Treatise on Probability* (for a discussion of probability in the Utilitarian Calculus).

E. Albee: *History of English Utilitarianism.*

Leslie Stephen: *The English Utilitarians.*

Chapter X. THE STANDARD AS DETERMINED BY EVOLUTION.

P. Geddes and J. A. Thomson: *Evolution* (Home University Library).

H. SPENCER: DATA OF ETHICS.

(Sidgwick: *Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer and J. Martineau.*)

W. R. Sorley: *Ethics of Naturalism.*

T. H. Huxley: *Evolution and Ethics.*

*J. S. Huxley: *Evolution and Ethics* (Romanes Lecture).

*(Review by Prof. C. D. Broad: *Mind.* N.S. Vol. LIII, p. 344.)

Leslie Stephen: *The Science of Ethics.*

S. Alexander: *Moral Order and Progress.*

S. Alexander: *Natural Selection in Morals.*

(*International Journal of Ethics.* Vol. II, No. 4.)

C. Lloyd Morgan: *Emergent Evolution.*

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